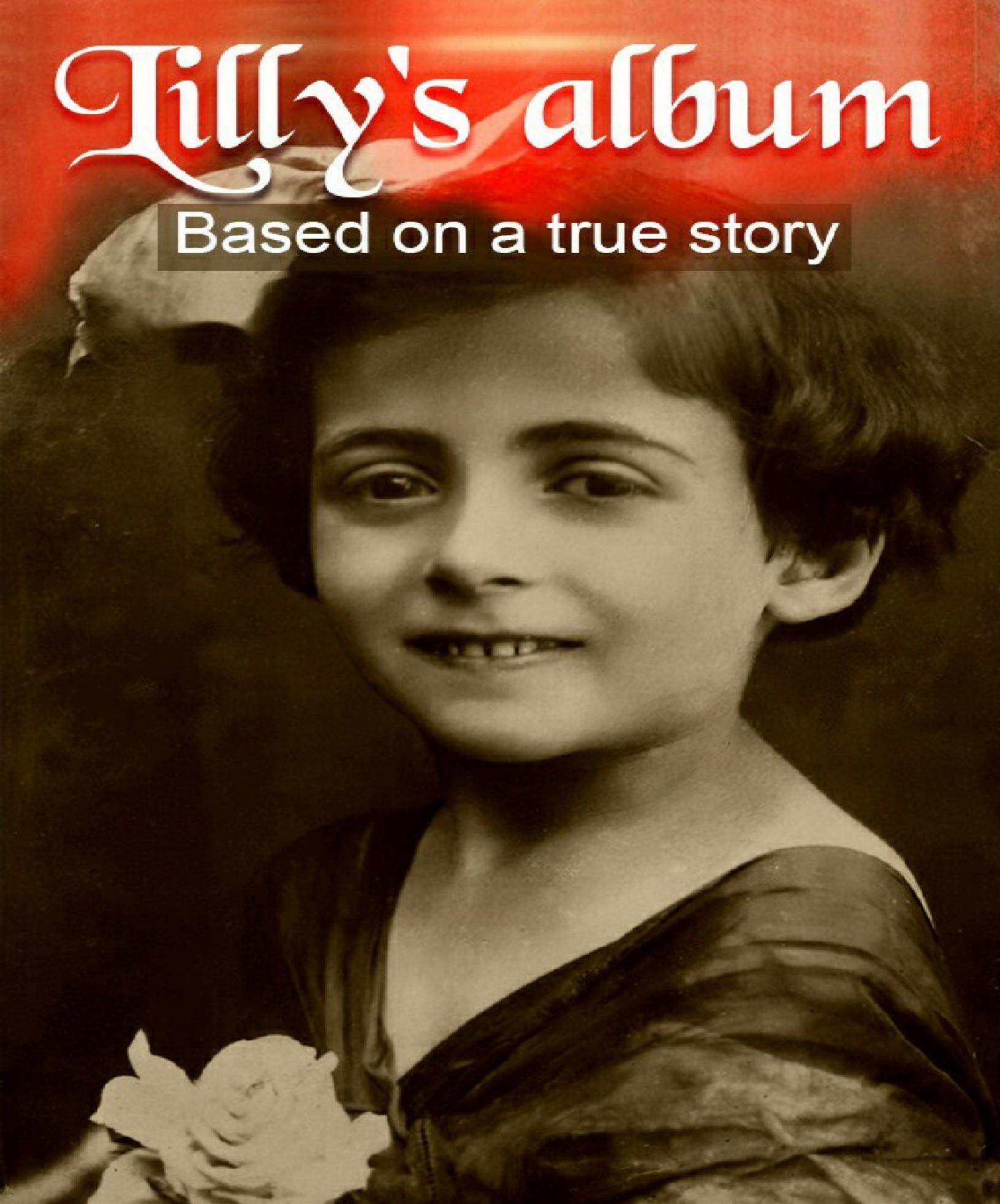


Lilly's album

Based on a true story



Uri J. Nachimson

Lilly's Album

Novel based on a true story

By Uri Jerzy Nachimson

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Treblinka

There is no voice as sad as the wind at Treblinka.
Eyes we have but see not, ears we have but hear not.

Only the heart knows and it shudders in silence.
Only the wind was kind, shrouding their ashes
 In the crevices of the earth, gently covering.
When the world turned aside, only the wind gave eulogy!
 In mercy we are spared of the everlasting wails.
 In death, too, these cheated, but not forgotten;
The wind, the moaning wind, sentinel of the dead.
 It shall bide here, beating its wings in sorrow!

(Dedicated to Lilly by Edwin Vogt, 2000)

To properly mourn my family I had first get to know them,
so I raised them from their unknown graves, brought them
to life, and then let them die with dignity.

(Uri Jerzy Nachimson)

Main Characters in the Book:

Wolf and Ida Nachimzon: parents of David, Lilly and Izio.

David, Lilly, Izio: children

Eugenia, Roza, Cesia, Emma, Berta, (nee Friedberg) Muniek: brother and sisters of Ida

Stanislaw Szajkowski: husband of Eugenia

Paulina Nachimzon, (nee Wolfson): Wolf's mother, sister of Juliusz Wolfson.

Izabela Grinevskaya: Ida's aunt (pen name of Berta Friedberg)

Moses Samuel Wolowelski: Cesia's husband (father of Adam and Jerzy)

Adam Wolowelski son of Moses and best friend of David

Jan Sosnowski: Count from the village of Maluszyn

Zosia Szawlonska: Polish neighbor (Ewa's mother)

Fela Goslawska: Lilly's friend from Warsaw

Irena Oleinikowa: David's Polish girlfriend from Wloszczowa

Klara Feinski: David's Jewish girlfriend from Warsaw

Edek (Edward) Zaidenbaum: Lilly's Jewish boyfriend

Lolek Bitoft: Lilly's Polish boyfriend and son of the Pharmacist in Wloszczowa

Prologue

On a cold and snowy winter day, in 1943, the last transport from the ghetto of Włoszczowa, a small town in the south of Poland, is getting ready to leave. It is transporting the last remaining Jews to the Treblinka death camp. There, on a concrete platform fenced in with barbed wire, German soldiers stand guard, some holding onto fierce attack dogs, exposing their intimidating teeth. With the butts of their rifles, they shoved the frightened people who had just disembarked from the train they had been squeezed in for two days in sealed wagons without any food or water. They are led into a large concrete structure and commanded to undress and get ready to shower. Completely naked, they are told to run into the "cleansing" hall; when it was full, the doors were shut. Among dozens of Jews who were crammed into the sealed chamber I spotted Lilly, my young and beautiful aunt, standing there naked, trying

to hide her nakedness with her hands, shivering with cold and fear. Almost complete darkness reigns inside with people pushing, praying, crying and screaming in despair.

After a few minutes a small hatch opens from the ceiling and a single beam of light penetrates. Everybody looks up and watches as a small canister is thrown down into the room. Suddenly a pungent smell rises from the floor and engulfs the room. People grab their throats, choking, coughing and vomiting. They start climbing one onto the other as they try to reach higher levels where there is still some air.

After a few moments, there is complete stillness; no groaning or suffering. Deathly silence takes over.

The sound of creaking hinges is heard and the doors open. Guards wearing masks peek inside and see that there are still some bodies twitching and fluttering as white foam drips from their mouths. The guards quickly move away, allowing the gas to dissipate and evaporate before other prisoners arrive to remove the bodies and move them to the crematorium where they will be burnt. Among those bodies is the body of my aunt Lilly, who was only twenty-seven years old.

I recognized her image from the many pictures that were found in perfect order in her personal album that was hidden by a Polish family. I also felt I knew her from stories that I heard about her from my father - her older brother.

Ever since I saw her image, I began to dream, and the dream haunts me; those frightening recurring images. Nearly always, at the point when her body is thrown into the oven of the crematorium and the metallic sound of the iron door being locked, I wake up sweating with my heart pounding.

I lie awake in bed and think and imagine what those poor souls, who

went like lambs to the slaughter, must have experienced. Those were real people, many of whom were from my large and diverse family. Those thoughts provoke anger in me and a strong desire to take revenge. My body aches and refuses to believe that all this really happened.

But I have been there several times, to Majdanek, Treblinka, Auschwitz, Birkenau and Dachau. I saw everything; the barracks, the crematoria, the execution wall, the platform and train tracks. Although seventy years have passed, it seems as if it were yesterday.

Lilly was murdered four years before I was born, and two years before the Second World War ended.

Poland, the small town of Włoszczowa December 25,
1915

Lilly's birth

Lilly was born a minute after midnight on the 25th December 1915, just as the nearby church bells rang heralding the birth of Jesus. She came

into the world like him, as a Jew.

Lilly's family lived in the Polish town of Włoszczowa, southeast of the capital city of Warsaw. They lived in Kilinskiego street number 13. A small white two-story row house, where from the front gate of the house, a narrow paved path led to the main entrance door. In the rear there was an unkempt garden with wooden fences that separated it from the neighbors on both sides.

When Ida's labor began and the contractions became stronger, Jadwiga, the Polish midwife, was called to help prepare for the imminent birth. Several days earlier, Dr. Herman Mirabel, a close family member from Łódź, was summoned to deliver the baby. Wolf, Ida's husband, had insisted that he will be present at the birth. Although Dr. Herman was a dentist, Wolf respected the vast knowledge he had of medicine, since he had studied medicine for several years before specializing in dentistry, and his presence had a calming effect on Wolf.

Ida was no longer a youngster; she was nearly thirty years old and she had given birth to her first-born son Davidek nearly three years ago. Little Davidek was now hiding beside the fireplace on the ground floor, as his uncle Stanisław was trying to distract him from what was happening on the top floor by playing hide-and-seek with him. Dr. Herman had also overseen the first birth, even though it had taken place in the hospital in Warsaw.

Despite his heavy weight, Wolf displayed an incredible agility running up and down the narrow stairs every few minutes. When he reached the top floor, he stood by the closed door and listened to what was happening. He then ran down to give his brother-in-law Stanisław a progress report. Just when the church bells began to ring and the Christian world was informed about the birth of Jesus the messiah, the voice of a crying

newborn could be heard.

Wolf raced up the stairs. When he reached the bedroom door he stopped for a moment and as a fine Polish gentleman, he first cautiously knocked and asked if he were permitted to enter.

Little Davidek had to wait downstairs for another hour, before being permitted to see his new baby sister. When the door to Ida's room was finally opened, Stanislaw and Davidek went upstairs to see baby Lilly, who was clean and wrapped in a towel, tucked in her mother's arms with an appearance of calmness spread across her beautiful little face.

Jadwiga rushed to place the dirty sheets and towels into a large sack. Ida lay in bed covered by a white sheet to her waist, exhausted, but with a happy smile as she had always wanted a daughter, whom she could call Lilly.

As soon as Ida felt strong enough to walk around, she allowed visitors to come to the house. To accommodate everybody, Wolf had to extend the family dinner table and he placed it against the living room wall. He put out several bottles of Wisniak, vodka, and plates of neatly cut-up kielbasa¹ pieces. Into floral ceramic bowls, he placed delicious smelling strudel pastries along with poppy-seed yeast cake that his Polish neighbor Zosia Szawlonska had prepared in advance.

The first to arrive was the battalion commander of the Austro-Hungarian army camped out in Rynek square in the center of the city. He was the commander of the occupying unit who had entered the city a few months earlier without facing any resistance and without a single shot being fired.

The townspeople looked at them with apathy and indifference, while the soldiers chuckled as they looked with curiosity at the Orthodox Jews, wearing long black coats and fur hats, sporting long beards and side

locks, on both sides of their faces, that blew in the winter wind. The language they spoke sounded like German, but they could not understand it at all.

Wolf approached the officer, shook his hand as he bowed and said, "Welcome to my home, Herr Kommandant Schoenfeld. What an honor this is."

The officer stomped with his shiny black leather boots, approached Wolf and patted him on his shoulder and replied, "I have come to bestow my blessings upon you on this happy occasion. I thank you for inviting me."

Wolf accompanied the officer to the table, introduced him to the Ida and the baby and poured two glasses of vodka.

"To Lilly," Officer Schoenfeld bellowed. "May she merit a long and happy life." With that, they raised their glasses and poured the contents down their throats.

Wolf had known Officer Schoenfeld, who was a bridge enthusiast, ever since he occupied the town of Włoszczowa and settled there. When he inquired among the residents of the town who played bridge, Wolf, an avid player, made himself known. Every Wednesday evening promptly at six o'clock, Wolf would arrive, on his motorcycle, at the estate of Count Jan Sosnowski. Wolf was the Count's accountant and financial advisor. On his way he would pass by the church and pick up the town's priest, Father Dabrowski, who was an astute and sharp bridge player and who admired Wolf greatly.

Although Wolf was a Jew, he did not feel much sympathy for religion, any religion. He had never been inside a synagogue, did not understand the Yiddish language, and rarely had contact with Orthodox Jews. He was not interested in politics and adopted the popular Polish customs. He would introduce himself as a Pole of Jewish origin. However, he never denied

his origin or tried however to hide it in any way.

When the private driver of Count Sosnowski arrived at the house and walked up the stairs alone, Wolf sensed that the Count would not be attending the celebration. Indeed, the Count did not come, but he sent a carved box of painted wood that had a thin silver chain with a clasp in the shape of a heart in it. It neatly fit around the tiny arm of baby Lilly.

Wolf excitedly thanked the driver and handed him a glass of fine vodka with some pieces of *kielbasa*. There was great mutual respect between the Count and Wolf, a kind of repressed friendship, not the intimate friendship that existed between him and Father Dabrowski.

Then Aunt Eugenia, Ida's sister, arrived with her husband Stanislaw. Ida's fifteen-year-old sister, Emma, arrived with her unmarried sister Roza, with whom she lived. Emma was a voracious reader, a bookworm, and an excellent student, but stubborn and rebellious. When the secular Jewish youth movement was established, she joined without consulting anybody in the family. After several weeks she moved on to a more advanced youth movement, known as *Hachalutz*, which combined advanced agricultural studies with sports training.

Then Dr. Herman's wife, Aunt Bertha, with her two children Mietek and Irka, arrived, having traveled all the way from Lodz.

Father Dabrowski arrived to convey his good wishes, but stayed for only a few minutes. Although nearly everybody knew of him and about his friendship with Wolf, he did not stay for long, so as not to embarrass the guests with his presence.

As the first guests began to leave, Ida's sister Cesia and brother Muniek arrived. At the same time, their good neighbor Zosia, who was highly pregnant, also arrived. She had been very helpful around the house making sure that Ida had everything she needed.

Everyone wanted to hold baby Lilly who was sleeping in her mother's arms and was oblivious to what was taking place around her.

Dr. Herman offered himself as a waiter. He served everyone with steaming hot tea from the very impressive *samovar* that Wolf had received from his older brother, when he had visited him in Moscow a few years earlier.

"Is the water hot enough?" Ida asked. Hermann looked at her, smiled and said, "Do you not trust me, dear?"

Ida was concerned because a cholera epidemic was raging in town and had claimed many casualties.

Aunt Eugenia was not at all pleased with the presence of the Austrian officer, and showed great displeasure when he approached her and kissed her hand. He looked at her and spoke in German, but she pretended that she did not understand what he said.

Eugenia moved toward Ida, took Lilly from her hands, and said, "Now you have to play something for us." Ida blushed and tried to get away, but all the guests began to clap, so she had no choice. She took her twelve-string double guitar, sat on a slightly higher chair and began to strum. Her slender fingers began moving quickly and the pleasant sounds of a flamenco rhythm that she had learned from a Gypsy street musician, began to emerge. She had brought the Gypsy home and paid him with hot meals so that he would practice her favorite flamenco melodies with her.

The Austrian officer, who was quite drunk, tried his hand at dancing, while the guests encouraged him with rhythmic applause. Wolf stood behind him with outstretched hands ready to support him in case he stumbled. Suddenly Wolf found himself lying on his back on the floor, while the officer was still dancing and stamping the soles of his boots on

the thick carpet that covered the wooden floor.

re.

Ida stopped her playing. Stanislaw and Dr. Hermann dragged Wolf into the bedroom and laid him down and undid his bow tie and belt. Wolf, who suffered from high blood pressure, was periodically in need of leeches to be placed on him in order to suck out his blood to lower his blood pressure.

From the glass jars that stood in the corner of his desk, they removed the hungry leeches and placed them around his neck and arm.

The bewildered guests began to disperse and leave. Thus, on a discordant note, the birthday celebration in honor of Lilly abruptly ended.

A few days later Wolf recovered.

Dressed as usual in his elegant suit, sporting a black bow tie, a walking stick in one hand and a brown leather briefcase in the other, he went to his meetings. Wolf, who had studied law had never practiced as such. While living in Warsaw he applied to, and was hired by, the Ministry of Finance. He specialized in the monitoring of tax payments, and was appointed regional supervisor of the Radom-Kielce district. Since Włoszczowa was only fifty kilometers from Kielce, and that was where Ida's sister Eugenia and her husband Stanislaw Szajkowski and unmarried sister Roza lived, he decided to settle in Włoszczowa. He rented a small house and moved all his belongings from Warsaw.

Wolf's brother-in-law, Stanislaw, was employed by the local authorities as a forester where he worked for several years. He was in charge of the logging and the controlled thinning of the surrounding forests.

He then got a job managing a large saw mill belonging to one of the

wealthiest people of Włoszczowa, Rabbi Moses Eisenkott, a strictly observant Jew. Since the local farmers would harass his workers, Rabbi Eisenkott gave Stanislaw the responsibility of dealing with the farmers. Stanislaw was well built, good looking, tall, bright eyed and had straight spiky hair like a hedgehog. He had studied in Polish schools and spoke fluent Polish. However, when it came to speaking to the Polish peasants, he spoke in their language and spiced up his words and threats with every vulgar word imaginable. That was the only language they understood.

Many a time even on very cold days, he would remove his shirt, grab a long ax and chop a tree down singlehanded, all to impress and to scare those who intended to harass the employees of Rabbi Eisenkott.

The murder of Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, by a Serbian student, did not shock the Polish press. The incident appeared in a small article and did not arouse much interest. Nobody thought that a local incident that had taken place in Sarajevo would affect the whole of Europe and be the catalyst for the start of the First World War.

When the Austro-Hungarian army invaded Warsaw in early August 1914 and defeated the Russians, the sworn enemy of the Poles, in the eyes of many they were their allies and saviors. When they entered the city of Włoszczowa there was no great resentment against the conquering army. To the contrary, the Jews, who had recently suffered from repeated attacks at the hands of the local farmers, hoped that from now on they would be protected by the occupying battalion stationed in the city.

In March 1917, rumors circulated of unprecedented protests across the Polish-Russian border, as the Russian Czar Nicholas II, had abdicated and appointed a weak government. The Bolshevik Party, led by Vladimir Lenin, became more and more vocal, until the night of October 24th of

that year the Communists overthrew the government and seized power. On the night of July 16th 1918, the entire Romanov family, including Nicholas II, were executed in Moscow. The Russian bourgeoisie and nobility fled because of the anger of the masses. Among those who managed to escape to Poland with a large portion of their wealth, was a Jewish businessman named Moses Moses Wolowleski. He fled to Poland and reached Warsaw together with his five-year-old son, Adam.

Bolshevik winds blowing from the east

On November 2nd, 1917 Lord Balfour wrote the following official letter to Lord Rothschild, which became known as the Balfour Declaration.

*Foreign Office
November 2nd, 1917*

Dear Lord Rothschild:

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours,

Arthur James Balfour

When the content of the letter was published in the press, the Jewish members of the city administration of Włoszczowa, organized a mass solidarity rally. All kindergartens and Jewish school children, including Hasidic schools and yeshiva students from the villages around came to the assembly. The town square was full of celebrating people. Wolf and his son David were among the participants at the rally. Speeches were made and the atmosphere was festive. The leaders of the *Bonds* organization were absent, but the rest of the Zionist movements, religious and secular participated.

This was one of the rare occasions when one could see bearded *Hasidim* embracing secular Jews and greeting them with blessings of thanks for the opportunity given to them by Her Majesty's Government for the return to the Jewish people to their homeland. There were those who came although they did not understand the significance of the announcement. The feeling was that something grand was happening

and that perhaps the Messiah had arrived to take them to the land of milk and honey.

Many knew that the goal was to leave their beloved country which had been their homeland for many generations; the country to which they were loyal, their culture, language, customs. They would have to leave all the wealth they had accumulated behind and start a new life elsewhere, in a hostile country, with a harsh climate and a Muslim population who didn't want them there.

A few days after the great euphoria, everything calmed down. Life in the town returned to normal and remained relatively quiet. The occupying army had brought in their own administrators, albeit German speaking, and all government institutions, courts and municipal offices re-opened once again. Many street names have been changed and the name of the Rynek (Market Square) was re-named *Franz Josef Platz*.

On market day, many soldiers came and bought merchandise even from Jewish vendors. The competition among the Polish vendors often led to riots and Rynek Square turned into a battlefield.

Roza and Emma, got along well. Roza was the oldest of the six daughters and one son of Isaac Friedberg, a businessman, whose business had failed and he died a broken man at an early age. He was one of the sons of the well-known Jewish writer Abraham Shalom Friedberg, who died in 1902 and was buried in Warsaw.

After Roza was born to Isaac and Leah, they had Ida and Bertha. When his first wife died, Isaac re-married and had daughters Eugenia and Cesia, son Muniek and youngest daughter Emma. Since Roza remained single, she "adopted" her younger sister Emma, and they lived together in a small apartment.

Once, when Emma returned from the all girls' school where she learned

the art of embroidery and weaving, she brought home a thin booklet which she had hidden under her shirt.

Roza noticed that everyday Emma locked herself in her room and hardly came out and she began to suspect something.

One day Roza surprised Emma and entered her room as she was reading the booklet.

"May I know what you are reading?" she asked curiously.

"What difference does it make? Better that you don't know," Emma answered.

"I demand that you tell me," Roza insisted.

"It's the Manifesto of the Communist Party by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels," Emma replied.

"Do you know that you are taking trash into the house? Do you want us both to wind up in jail?" Roza screamed.

"You have nothing to worry about. The revolution is already here," Emma replied in an authoritative voice of importance.

"What are you talking about? I do not want to hear this nonsense of yours," Roza retorted.

"Did I not tell you that you were better off not knowing what I was reading. You don't want to listen to me," Emma began. "Poland is a nationalistic country, and we must get rid of the nationalism because the proletariat is in a national trance. The proletariat must unite into one nation, but on the condition that they get rid of the bourgeoisie."

Losing her wits, Roza shouted on top of her lungs, "Shut up, I don't want to hear what you're saying. We will all go to jail because of you," and began to attack Emma trying to grab the brochure from her hands.

"A new society will arise. Communism will rule the world where

everybody will be equal. There will be no social classes and no religion. Don't you see the progress?" Emma insisted.

Rose grabbed the booklet from Emma's hand and began tearing out pages and chewing on them.

"They may not be found even in the garbage pail," Roza screamed.

Emma did not get excited. She allowed Roza go wild with the booklet as she watched it disappear in her throat.

She stood up, pulled down her big backpack from on top of the closet and began to pack her clothes and belongings.

"What are you doing?" Roza asked.

"I'm packing because I am leaving," Emma answered in a spine-chilling tone.

"Where will you go?" Roza asked as tremors of anxiety could be heard in her voice.

"To mother Russia, where I belong," she replied.

Roza tried to dissuade her and said, "You are only seventeen years old. Do you know what can happen to you in Russia being all alone?"

"I am almost eighteen," Emma snapped back. "I know exactly what I am doing. Don't worry about me. I will not write anything to you, so as not to involve you."

Roza approached her, hugged her and said, "I will miss you very much. You are like a daughter to me, even though you are my younger sister."

Emma hugged Roza tightly and cried quietly and said, "I will not say good-bye to everyone. Please give them my love and ask them all for forgiveness. There is a fire burning inside me and I see in communism the future of the world. It will also reach Poland, at which time I will return home to my family."

Roza took a wad of bills that she kept for a rainy day, from a jar that was

hidden in an alcove beside the fire place.

With tears in her eyes Roza said, "This is for you, so that you can arrive safely wherever that may be." Emma tried to push her away, but Roza stuffed the money into her coat pocket.

Emma was a physically developed young lady and was very active in sports. The clothes she wore were always a bit too big on her, and she had a masculine walk. She regularly wore a cap made of a coarse fabric that hid her young looking face. She went to an all girls' school, but she did not see her future as a worker in a textile factory. She had other ambitions. She wanted to better the world, as she saw human suffering and human exploitation as the cause of all social ills.

As with the rest of her family members, she also did not attribute much importance to religion. She claimed to all those who would listen to her, that the time has come for the Jews to accept the customs of the Poles, dress like them, speak their language and assimilate with them. There ought not to be any distinction between a Polish Jew and a Polish Catholic. Religion should be considered secondary and unimportant in the eye of the law.

Emma's first attempt to cross the border into Russia failed. Her misfortune came when she was deceived by some Polish fishermen who had promised her to take her across the River *Bug*. She paid them part of the fee, and then set a place and time where to meet. When she arrived at the appointed time, nobody was there waiting for her. Afraid that the Poles would betray her to the police, she fled and ran to the closest border town. There she got on to a carriage that took her to the county town of Kielce. From Kielce, it took her two more days to finally return home.

When Roza opened the door and saw Emma standing there, they fell into each other's arms and wept uncontrollably. Roza never asked what had happened to her, and Emma considered herself lucky that she was not caught and thrown into jail. Nobody raised the issue again. She went back to her old routine, but never gave up on the idea of communism. She waited for the opportune time to join them.

Emma's attempt to cross the border was a secret she shared only with Roza and it remained unknown to the rest of the family.

Emma, who closely followed the events happening in Russia, began preparing herself once again to run off to Russia. She decided not to go by herself again , and began talking to friends from the secular Jewish youth movement about joining her. She succeeded in convincing two of them.

Fiszel and Wladek both hailed from Włoszczowa. Fiszel was the eldest son of Simon Wasserman, a wealthy leather merchant who had a warehouse near the market and owned a spacious two-story house with a large yard. Simon was an ardent and active Zionist who sent his son, Fiszel, to the *Beitar* youth movement, and later on to the secular youth movement, where he met Emma.

Wladek hailed from the outskirts of town, where the people lived in wooden shacks. His father, Hirsch, was a pauper, who would clean Rynek square on market days. The stallholders would pay him with a bit of food, and more than once he came home from work empty-handed and his family went to bed with their stomachs grumbling from hunger.

Wladek, who was strong and trained in the youth movements, saw Emma's enthusiasm about communism and it opened a new vision for him. He agreed to leave Poland with her and Fiszel and join the Bolsheviks in Russia.

Fiszel and Wladek, both in their twenties, were not such close friends, although they saw each other at times at the club. Both were fond of Emma who was now barely eighteen years old.

Thus, on November 3rd 1918, while the Austro – Hungarian army was leaving Poland and the day that Poland declared its independence, three youngsters left home. An acquaintance that had a small truck transported them close to the Ukrainian border, where a small boat was waiting for them to transport them to the Russian side.

Emma disappeared in the chaos of the Bolshevik Revolution, and her family never heard from her again.

Lilly was three years old when Emma left, never to return.

Luck Smiles on Cesia

Independence Day celebrations on the third of November 1918 lasted

several days. People danced in the streets, taverns were full of people and huge bonfires were lit that spread heat and created a holiday atmosphere in Włoszczowa. Stands placed around the Rynek square, were selling Polish delicacies. Little piglets threaded on skewers were rotating and roasting over hot coals. Groups of Poles stood around waiting for the seller to finish sharpening his knife and to begin slicing juicy pieces of meat. Shotgun fire could be heard from the revelers as they fired into the air, marking the liberation of Poland from the hands of the Austro-Hungarians and Russians. There was great joy in the streets.

At home, Wolf, Ida, Cesia, Eugenia and Roza all sat in an atmosphere of gloom. Roza's eyes were red from crying, as she held the letter Emma had left on the table before leaving home. She read it over and over again, refusing to believe that she would not see her younger sister ever again.

The letter began with the words, *To my dear family*, and then went on to list each and every family member, including the names of Lilly and Davidek who were three and six years old respectively. No name was omitted.

By the time you read this letter, I will already be far away from you, within the borders of Mother Russia or in a Polish prison (in the event that I am caught). This time I am not alone. Two strong young men, both from Włoszczowa, are accompanying me. Do not worry about me. If the opportunity arises I will send you information about myself without endangering you in any way. Take care of yourselves. I am sure that sooner or later, the communist revolution will come to Poland and we will again be united. I love you all.

Wolf took the letter from Roza's hand and threw it into the fireplace.

"It's dangerous to have this type of letter around the house," Wolf began. "Should any acquaintances or neighbors ask what happened to Emma, tell them that she moved to Warsaw to live with her grandfather Isaac's brother, Ilia Friedberg, who is a famous dentist. This way nobody will suspect that she has just disappeared."

One day, Cesia, Ida's younger sister, decided to travel to Warsaw to visit her uncle Ilia. That would also afford her the opportunity to see his daughters Mila and Stefania, both of whom she had not seen in a very long time.

After an exhausting trip that took a whole day, she arrived in Warsaw. Her Uncle Ilia was waiting for her at the train station.

Dr. Ilia Frieberg lived in a luxurious apartment in a very prestigious suburb of Warsaw; his dental clinic was adjacent to his apartment. As he was one of the most popular dentists in the city, his clinic was always full of patients standing in line in the waiting room.

Ilia was very fond of Cesia and always worried lest she would remain an old spinster. At every opportunity he encouraged her to try to find a husband. He even tried to persuade her to stay in Warsaw where her chances of finding a husband to her liking were much greater. He was afraid that if she remained in Włoszczowa, having no choice, she would marry a young yeshiva student who had no profession. He did not realize that yeshiva students would not even consider a "shikse" like her.

Two days after her arrival, Uncle Ilia organized a festive dinner at his house, to which he invited Moses Wolowelsky, a wealthy businessman whom he had met at a club to which he belonged. They had in time become close friends. Moses was a rich widower from Moscow who had

made most of his money in real estate. At the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution, he had decided to flee to Poland together with his five-year-old son, Adam. Although he was forced to abandon his properties and most of his belongings, he managed to escape with a box full of gold ingots. He bribed the officials at the border to permit him to enter Poland and eventually reached Warsaw. He stayed in a luxury hotel and began buying real estate. He bought two apartment buildings on the prestigious Ogrodowa Street, each with ninety apartments, all of them rented. He then bought a flour mill in the suburb of Praga, and finally bought a villa in Michalin, a summer residence, 30 kilometers from Warsaw.

Cesia, although not so very young any more, was undoubtedly a beautiful woman. At the dinner Ilia introduced Cesia to Moses. She immediately captured his heart. Two days later, as they were walking in Park Lazienki, he proposed to her. A shocked Cesia requested that he allow her some more time so they could get to know each other better. However, Moses did not want to wait and he pressured Cesia for an answer. Within a few weeks they were married. In the spring of 1923 the wedding, a civil one, was held in the Town Hall. It was very low key. Besides the witnesses, it was attended only by Roza, Berta and her husband Herman, Eugenia and her husband Stanislaw, Ida and Wolf and her brother Muniek.

About a year after she was married, Cesia became pregnant. On weekends they lived in Michalin, while during the rest of the week they lived in a large apartment in one of the buildings on Ogrodowa Street in the center of Warsaw.

Ida ,who in 1922 had given birth to her third child ,a son who was named Izio, occasionally visited her sister Cesia, and would bring along Davidek

who was the same age as Adam. She would leave Lilly and Izio behind in Włoszczowa, in the care of their Polish neighbor Zosia, who they loved very much.

On January 13, 1925, Cesia gave birth to a son whom they named Jerzy. Moses loved history and especially that of the United States, which he had visited several times on business. He was a great admirer of George Washington and named his son Jerzy, which is the Polish version of George.

Not that long ago, Cesia thought to herself, she was a single young woman, who lived in a small town in the south east of Poland. Although she did not come from a poor home, they were not rich either. Her parents had been Jewish bourgeoisie - Polish, educated and people of standing. Her sister Ida was married to Wolf, a lawyer, whose mother, Pauline, hailed from the well-known Wolfson family. Pauline's brother, Julius Wolfson, was a composer and conductor at the Philharmonic Orchestra of Vienna. He was always traveling between Vienna, Warsaw and Berlin and had been to New York many times. Pauline's uncle was David Wolfson, one of the founders of the Zionist movement and the deputy to Theodor Herzl, head of the World Zionist Movement.

Cesia herself was the granddaughter of the famous Jewish writer, Abraham Shalom Friedberg who died when she was seven years old. She attended the funeral which was held in Warsaw and listened to the eulogies delivered by many prominent community members including the chief rabbi of Warsaw. She visited his grave site many times. The tombstone was designed by a famous architect

She remained in touch with his daughters. Her aunt, Isabella Grinevskaya, nee Berta Friedberg, was a playwright and novelist and at

that time lived in Constantinople. Bertha's sister ,Luba, lived in Lodz. She was a dentist and was married to a dentist, Herman Mirabel. Her uncle, Ilia Friedberg was also a well-known dentist in Warsaw.

Cesia's head was in the clouds.

Ever since she had married a wealthy man and their son Jerzy was born, she felt on top of the world. At every occasion, Moses gave her gold jewelry decorated with diamonds, mink furs and imported hats from Paris. She had domestic help for cleaning and childcare, as well as a chauffeur who drove her everywhere. She loved all the wealth, loved the nightlife of Warsaw and disliked visiting Włoszczowa. Most of all she resented anything remotely connected to Judaism and religion.

When Jerzy was born, Cesia decided not to circumcise him. Moses begged and pleaded with her, but to no avail. She remained adamant. She claimed that circumcision was an act of barbarism and in their modern times it was unnecessary to mutilate body parts.

"If you claim that God created man why cut off the tip of his penis? What happened? Did He make a mistake with his creation," she asked Moses. At such a weighty question, Moses had no answer..

After she was widowed Paulina Wolfson, grandmother of Lilly, Davidek and Izio, moved in with her brother Julius in Vienna. But she could not get used to life in the big city, and after two years she decided to move in with her son Wolf in Włoszczowa.

Life in Włoszczowa

Life in the city of Włoszczowa was quite relaxed. The neighborly relations with the Catholic inhabitants were good, with the exception of a few disputes among the peasants, brought about because of competition. On market days, the Jewish buyers preferred to buy from Jewish peddlers, both because of the rabbinic seal of approval and due to competitive prices. The Catholic peasants, whose products were better and fresher, got very upset and viewed the Jewish buying practices as a boycott against them. All in all, however, friendly relations existed among the residents in the city, and there were even a few cases of mixed marriages.

The Jews in the surrounding villages were mostly orthodox who spoke mainly Yiddish and hardly any Polish. They looked different from the rest of the population, sporting beards and sidecurls and always wearing long black coats and black hats. Poverty was rampant, as each family had many children. Instead of schools, the children were sent to a private house where a rabbi taught them Torah. These were not like government schools, where children studied history, math, science, Polish and even French as a second language.

When they came from the outlying "shtetel" (small Jewish villages established around a large city) to Włoszczowa with their horse or mule-drawn cart, the Jews were often the recipients of stones that the Catholic children threw at them. Insults and curses were also a regular

occurrence; at times they did not even understand the insults screamed at them.

The Jews who lived in the town who were not religious distanced themselves from the orthodox Jews and treated them disrespectfully. Many despised them outright .They saw themselves as Poles of the Mosaic faith, and not as Jews living in Poland.

Every morning, Wolf would leave his house, neatly and elegantly dressed in a plaid jacket, bow tie, and white cotton trousers with a leather briefcase.

Since the cost of living in Włoszczowa was rather high, his government salary was barely enough to cover his expenses, so he took upon himself additional work. He was hired as a financial advisor to Count Jan Sosnowski, a rich Polish nobleman who lived on a large estate approximately thirty kilometers away in the town of Maluszyn. The count was a hearty man who loved women, playing cards and drinking. In Wolf he found two things; a consultant who helped him streamline his business and make it more profitable and a companion for a good game of bridge.

Along with his job, Wolf received a car to travel to work. It was a Fiat 520 Cabriolet with gas lamps. On the weekends he would ride around the neighborhood on his Ariel model English motorcycle that he purchased for four thousand zloty.

Thursday of every week was market day. The peddlers would arrive at the crack of dawn with their goods in carts drawn by horses or donkeys and begin setting up their stalls in the Rynek Square marketplace. Some even harnessed themselves to smaller wagons with two wooden wheels,

while another person stood in the back and pushed. Even on rainy days, when they were exposed to storms that struck the region, they could not give up, because of the need to bring money home to support the family.

One morning, as every morning, Ida took Davidek, who had just turned twelve, to school. That day Lilly decided she did not want to go to school because she claimed that she was bored. She already knew how to read and write, for she studied the material from her brother's books. Izio, who had a cold, stayed home with his grandmother.

Since that day was market day, Ida and her daughter Lilly walked from home to the square as the distance was not that great. Ida allowed Lilly to run ahead and back again, as she wanted her to release some energy and calm down a bit.

As they got closer to the market the sight of the bearded peddlers wearing long black coats frightened Lilly and she clung tightly to her mother.

"Mamushka," she asked, "Who are these people?"

"Orthodox Jews from the surrounding areas," Ida answered.

"We are also Jews," she stated. "Why do they look different?"

"They are religious Jews who belong the Hasidic movement, while we are not religious and belong to a different movement," Ida replied.

"Why do they speak German and not Polish?" Lilly asked.

"They are speaking Yiddish, the language of the Eastern European Jews," her mother replied.

"Why do we do not speak Yiddish?" Lilly asked inquisitively.

Ida tried to give her nine-year-old daughter an answer that she could understand. "We are more modern and open-minded Jews who believe that we must move forward and live in Poland, like Poles. We are first Poles and then Jews."

"Mamushka, I am so glad that we do not belong to the Hasidic movement," Lilly said while hugging her mother.

"They are good, hard-working people with large families. We must respect all human beings, regardless of religion or ethnic origin," Ida replied.

Little Lilly did not answer. She stared at the children who were approximately the same age as she was, working very hard helping their parents. Some carried heavy sacks on their backs while some stood on boxes, loudly announcing the nature of their goods in order to arouse the curiosity of the buyers and attract them to their stand. They wore old patched clothes, worn-out shoes and large caps on their heads.

After buying some potatoes and carrots, Ida finally arrived at the butcher's stand to buy a chicken. The butcher took out a fat chicken from the coop, showed it to her and waited for her agreement. When Ida nodded her head in agreement, the butcher took the chicken by its neck and swung it in a forward motion. With its head dangling, the chicken continued to shriek and flap its wings. After a few minutes the chicken died and the butcher's wife immediately began plucking its feathers.

"I will not eat this chicken nor will I eat the soup that it was cooked in," Lilly announced in an angry voice.

Ida looked at her daughter and said, "So you will remain hungry," she said.

She then added, "I cannot buy at the Jewish butcher, indeed his whole chickens are already dead and headless, however they are salted and father may not eat any salt. Also, his chickens may not be fresh."

"Nevertheless, I will not eat the chicken after I saw it was killed," Lilly responded.

After Ida took the chicken wrapped in newspaper and put it into her shopping bag, the two started walking home.

"I must go into Bitoft's pharmacy for a minute to get something," Ida said and crossed Rynek Square, with Lilly reluctantly in tow.

Bitoft, who was tall, solidly built with a black mustache adorning his face, stood behind the counter, looked at her and asked, "How can I help you madam?"

I need cough medicine. Izio is constantly coughing. I am sure that he has bronchitis," Ida said to him.

How old is he?" the pharmacist asked.

"Two years old," she replied.

"Wait a few minutes and I will prepare an appropriate syrup," he said as he walked off into his laboratory.

Ida and Lilly sat on the bench waiting. A cute boy, neatly dressed with golden curls and a smiling face sat next to them. The boy looked at Lilly and did not take his eyes off her.

"Why are you looking at me all the time?" she protested.

The boy's face reddened as he looked down to the floor. He did not open

his mouth.

Ida, who felt his embarrassment tried to straighten things out.

"Why are you hurting the boy, he did nothing to offend you?" she scolded Lilly.

"Never mind," the boy said "She did not hurt me."

"Ho, ho, he knows how to talk," Lilly teased him.

Ida once again scolded Lilly and shoved her to shut up.

"Are you waiting for somebody?" Ida asked the boy.

"No, I am the son of a pharmacist, and I am waiting for my father to close the pharmacy and go home," he answered.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Lolek," he replied. "That is what everybody calls me."

"How old are you," Ida inquired.

"Twelve," he replied shyly.

Lilly listened attentively to the conversation, but did not interfere. She let her mother do the investigating.

"You are the same age as my Davidek. You might want to come play with him sometime," she said to him.

While Ida was explaining to Lolek where they lived, the pharmacist entered.

"I see you've introduced yourself to the ladies. You do not waste any time," he said with a smile.

Lolek blushed and looked down.

"He is very shy," Bitoft said winking at Lilly.

Lilly remained silent, but occasionally stole a glance at Lolek; whether out of curiosity, or to embarrass him more, only she knew. She relished seeing him embarrassed and red-faced.

Before leaving the pharmacy, Ida turned to Lolek and said, "The invitation still stands."

An Uninvited Guest

Once a week, Wolf went to play bridge at the count's estate in the nearby town of Maluszyn. He would take his motorcycle and, pick up his friend the priest on the way. This time he deviated from this practice and took his car.

Not only Wolf loved the game of bridge, but it intrigued also his son Davidek, who was very sharp and intelligent. Wolf coached him and taught him all the tricks he knew. Davidek knew that Wolf was a master bridge player.

On his way to the estate of Count Sosnowski, he picked up Pastor

Dabrowski from the nearby church, which was not far from the Rynek Square, along with Eva Sandowska. They were four regular partners in the game. Wolf always played as a pair with Eva, while the priest and the count were a pair. While they played, the personal butler of the count would serve sandwiches with smoked bacon, and fine vodka.

Wolf loved this beautiful life. He also loved it when Eva would place her foot between his legs under the table while they were playing, an act that disturbed his concentration. After a while, he would give her a threatening look to get her to stop and then he would emit sounds of simulated coughs in order to return to full concentration.

It didn't matter to Wolf that Eva was married and had two children. Very often he would tell her that her chubby son with the red hair looked very much like him. Eva took his words seriously and believed that the boy was Wolf's son. She kept her escapades a great secret. She knew that if her husband would suspect anything, he would, at best, throw her out of their home, and in the worst case beat her to death.

However, her husband did not suspect a thing. He knew that she was in good company with the priest of the town, a respected lawyer and the count. He was very proud that his wife had been accepted into the "high echelon" society of Włoszczowa, where he himself, a construction worker, would not even be able to come close to those people.

On their way home, half drunk, after a night of fun, Wolf would first drop off the priest at the entrance to the church and then continue with Eva towards the forest that bordered the road leading to the southern exit from the city. Here in the dead of night, nobody noticed that Wolf and Eva were having sex.

Wolf loved taking little Lilly for a ride on his motorcycle around town. Lilly would cling tightly to her father's broad back while with her slender fingers she dug into the folds of the fat of his body. When he eventually screamed for her to stop, she would burst out in laughter that was swallowed by the noise of the exhaust pipe.

When they returned home, a pot of hot *krupnik* soup, as only Grandma Paulina knew how to prepare, was awaiting them. Wolf liked to first pull the white beans out of the soup, then the chunks of meat and finally he sipped the liquid with the pearl barley.

When he was finished, he would always say, "I always get the least that is why I always finish first."

Ida would laugh when Wolf would alternately sip cold water to soothe his tongue which got burnt from eating the hot soup too quickly.

Five years after her disappearance, a sign of life from Emma surfaced.

One day there was a knock at Roza's door. When she opened it, she saw a thin man with a black beard, dressed in clothes that were too big for him and wearing a wool cap.

"Who are you? What do you want?" she asked, as she was about to close the door in his face.

"I have brought you information about Emma," the man answered.

Roza took a step forward out of the door, nearly pushing the man, looked around and saw that the street was empty. She opened the door wide and motioned with her head for him to enter.

She motioned for him to sit down at the table and offered him some

berries and nuts. Coughing and speaking in a weak voice, the man said, "Please, just give me a cup of hot tea."

Roza obliged and brought him a piping hot cup of tea.

"I just arrived from a harrowing trip from Kharkov," he began.

"I met Emma in a training camp, where she underwent physical training after joining the People's Party. We became very good friends. At the time, I was strong, solid and fit. That was until I contracted tuberculosis. I began losing weight and became weaker and weaker, until they wanted to send me to a sanatorium. I realized that I was doomed, because I knew that from there nobody ever returned. I successfully stole my way into Poland. I have gone through difficult times but at least I survived. Emma sent you this photograph of herself."

From deep inside his breast pocket he pulled out a folded photograph. She immediately recognized that the person in the picture was her sister Emma. Roza held the picture tightly in her hands while tears were streaming from her eyes. She stood up, took the man's hand and kissed it.

"I constantly worry about Emma," Roza said, "not knowing if she was alive, captured or imprisoned. At least now I know she is alive. Please tell me all about her."

Roza got up and brought him more hot tea with some biscuits.

The man gave a deep sigh and was suddenly struck with a bout of heavy coughing. He pulled out a handkerchief from his pocket and covered his mouth. Roza noticed that it was stained with blood.

She handed him the tea. "Drink. This will help you feel better."

The man sipped the hot tea slowly. While trying to suppress fits of coughing, he began to tell her story.

"My name is Janusz Gawronski. Before the revolution I lived in Brest-Litovsk. I consider myself Ukrainian, although my family originally came from a small village near Krakow. I am not impressed by revolutions. I know that they never improve the lot of the people. I have read many history books about revolutions, such as in England and France and the outcome is nearly always the same. I did not think a revolution would occur that would benefit the Russian people. The Poles feared, justifiably, the Bolshevik Revolution, so the only alternative I had was to join the revolution and become a small cog in the big wheel. They sent me to the communist youth training camp, where in the morning we studied and in the afternoon there were classes were wrestling, warfare, weaponry, underground warfare and propaganda distribution. Every day we would swear to the red flag with the hammer and sickle and sing the national anthem.

One day two young men and a girl from Poland joined us. They were Emma, Fisz and Wladek. While in Russia, Wladek changed his name to Vladimir. Emma was beautiful and smart, and maintained complete control over both of the boys. In fact, she was the initiator of whatever they did. Immediately upon their arrival they swore allegiance to the flag and the country. Emma delivered a long moving speech, during which she revealed that from the day that she began reading the writings of Karl Marx, she felt a new purpose in life. She worshiped communism as a religion, and was willing to sacrifice her life for her new homeland. She learned Russian quickly and began "chattering" to the camp supervisor.

After several months, Emma was appointed supervisor of the youths

who joined the party. Vladimir and Fiszel were sent to another camp and as a result she lost all contact with them. Although I did not have any official status, I was a good-looking, healthy and strong young man and I was able to persuade her to date me. Soon after, we began dating each other and not long after that we were a couple. Although we lived in separate quarters we nevertheless spent most of our spare time together. Emma accepted the fact that I was not a true-blooded communist and that I wanted to return to Poland some day and escape from the prevailing chaos.

As time passed, the tension between us increased but so did our love for one another.

It was at this time, that I began to cough. The coughing became stronger and stronger, until I started coughing up blood and phlegm. The doctors diagnosed me with tuberculosis and told me that my time in this world was limited. Emma cried all the time, lamenting the fact that she agreed to our courtship, knowing that it would soon come to an end. They prescribed some medicine which did not really help me at all. Emma was at a loss as how to help me and she was afraid to become infected and thus kept her distance from me. She feared that it was only a matter of time and the disease may start spreading and become an epidemic. All contact between us completely ceased.

One day I told Emma that I had decided to leave. She gave me your address and asked me to try to look you up. She requested that I convey to you that she is happy and well and to give the picture to you.

I tried crossing the border back into Poland several times, all without success. Finally my luck held. I hid in the back of a truck that was hauling food and blankets. And now I am here."

Roza just sat and listened to Janusz's story. He looked so miserable, emaciated and ill, that she asked, "Perhaps you want to stay with me until you feel better?"

"Thank you," Janusz replied. "However, I cannot take you up on your offer. You do not know me nor do you know anything about the disease I have."

"Stop," Roza said, as she got out of her chair. "I have decided to take care of you and you will get better. I'll give you Emma's room."

Roza knew there was no cure for tuberculosis and that Janusz's chances of recovery were slim at best, if not nil. Nevertheless she decided to try to save him. She knew that very few had returned from the sanatorium that treated tuberculosis patients. However, she felt that with devoted care at home there was a chance, albeit small, that he could recover.

Roza turned to Bitoft the pharmacist who prepared a potion made from different plants with a mixture of bark from a birch tree and forest moss. He recommended that Janusz sleep bare-chested in the sun and drink lots of liquids and rest.

Janusz was a disciplined patient. He knew that he was in a critical condition and therefore had no choice. He admired Roza's selfless dedication and did everything she told him.

Slowly he felt himself getting stronger and stronger and noticed that his appetite was returning. He knew that it was all due to the treatment he received from Roza.

Nearly a year later, he was completely healed. Everybody saw his recovery as a miracle, but Janusz knew that it was Roza who had saved

his life.

Janusz slowly began leaving the house to walk the streets of the town. He felt like part of the family and from time to time he even visited the home of Wolf and Ida. He would tell them about life in Russia, about Emma and about the burning love he had had for her until he fell ill. Whenever the family members would go to the river for a day of family fun, he would join them. Lilly even called him Uncle Janusz. He enjoyed it very much when he was surrounded by people, complete strangers to him, who had ended up adopting him as a member of the family.

He would sometimes take Lilly and Davidek for a walk along the river. He told them about life in Russia and about their aunt Emma who lived there. He also told them how he managed to escape from Russia and get to Poland hidden in the back of a truck. Lilly and Davidek loved to hear the wonderful stories that Uncle Janusz told them.

One thing they did not like was the way he harassed every woman he encountered on their way, either whistling at them, winking at them or just making unnecessary comments. The children saw this as rude behavior and Davidek even threatened to tell his parents.

Roza realized that if she did not talk directly to Janusz, he was not going to leave. He exploited the anti-communist political situation that existed in Poland, and in veiled threats he gave the household to understand that it was not in their best interests to get rid of him.

One day, while the two children were at school and Izio was with the neighbor, Roza went to her sister Ida's house. She did not know that Wolf was at home at the time.

"I cannot take it anymore. He is driving me mad," she exclaimed. "What

troubles have befallen me and all because I felt sorry for him."

Wolf approached her, and placed his hand on her shoulder.

"I will talk to him. He cannot take advantage of your goodness with such maliciousness," he said in a low authoritative voice. Roza let out a sigh of relief and said, "I just hope that he will not cause us any grief and just leave."

The economic conditions in Poland were murky at best and unemployment was running rampant. Wolf complained that it was difficult to collect taxes. The wealthy hid their money and possessions, or concealed their income, while the less fortunate had no income. Count Sosnowski pressured Wolf to forge his true holdings in the land registry. Wolf would never do such a thing, and the pressure that was placed upon him did not please him at all. He feared that the count would be forced to declare bankruptcy and he would lose his job.

In the smaller towns the situation was even worse, as people were starving. Despite all, life had to go on.

Uncle Lazer Friedberg, brother of Isaac, Ida's father, wanted a better life. Under the influence of the *Bonds*, which was very active in Wloszczowa, he decided to emigrate to the United States. He would brag to all those around him and say, "Whoever has any brains, should leave this country."

A week later he was arrested. One morning two policemen came to his house, tied his hands behind his back and took him to the police station.

"Provocateur," they yelled at him, "You are trying to provoke havoc and chaos among the citizens."

Uncle Lazer, with his usual sarcasm, answered them and said, "You must thank me that I am leaving you without your having to kick me in the ass and throw me out of here."

The next day he was released without any complaint filed against him. He packed his bags and left for Gdansk, where he boarded a ship bound for Ellis Island in New York.

For the longest time we heard nothing from Uncle Lazer. It was as if he had disappeared somewhere in the world just like other descendants of the Friedberg family, son of the famous author Abraham Shalom Friedberg.

Approximately a year after he had disappeared, we suddenly began receiving letters from him. He told us that he had settled in Houston, Texas. He described the life as difficult, but a life of freedom, equality and full of hope. He begged the family to follow in his footsteps, leave Poland and come to live in America. Not one member of the family listened to him. In 1924, the United States closed the gateways of immigration to Jews from Europe.

By the time she was nine years old, Lilly was a mature girl with a distinct personality and a razor-sharp tongue.

"Do you not think that you've taken enough advantage of my aunt's kindness?" she asked Janusz one day. The man turned pale, looked at her with his ugly fish eyes, and said, "How dare you hurt Uncle Janusz like that, my dear Lilly?" Lilly pushed her way past Janusz, walked up to Davidek who was standing there, grabbed his hand, and in an angry tone said to him, "You are not my uncle and I am not your dear Lilly."

That fateful afternoon, Janusz disappeared, but not before taking the tin

box that was hidden under the kitchen sink, which contained money that my aunt Roza had hidden in case of emergency.

"Let him spend the money on doctors," Roza wished on him. "At least I won't have to see him again," she continued.

Roza could not imagine what would happen the next day.

Janusz walked aimlessly among the houses desperately looking for a place to live, when he raised the suspicion of the police. They approached him and asked to see his identity papers. Since he had none, he was arrested and taken in for questioning.

During the interrogation, he revealed that had arrived from Russia on a mission; to deliver a message to Wolf. Janusz wanted to punish Lilly for her "misdeeds" by causing her father to be arrested and interrogated.

That evening, Wolf was arrested. A police car arrived at the house, and an armed policeman forced his way into the house. He went straight to Wolf's room and began searching it.

Wolf tried to point out his innocence by claiming that he was a government official from the Ministry of Finance, in charge of tax collection, but to no avail. He was taken to the local police headquarters and transported to the prison in the city of Kielce.

He sat in prison for two months without anybody being allowed to visit him. When Ida and Stanislaw were finally allowed to visit him, he was already a broken man. He knew that would be fired from his job and a mark of disgrace would forever be upon his family. As a lawyer, he was familiar with the justice system and the law. All he could do was to wait for the trial where he could prove his innocence.

The Trial

Wolf's trial took place in the city of Kielce. The first hearing was scheduled for November 3, 1924, a very significant day in the history of Poland. It was on that day, six years earlier, that Poland was liberated from the oppression of the Russians and became a republic.

Beginning with his opening statements, the state attorney's remarks were overtly anti-Semitic.

"Your honor," he began. "Before us on trial stands a Jew, who many claim we discriminate against, who received a very prominent government job as the chief tax collector in Radom Kielce. What did he do in return? He betrayed his people and country and showed nothing but ingratitude and betrayal. He was the enemy from within."

He then listed all the trumped-up charges against Wolf.

At the trial he was questioned about his sister-in-law, Emma, who had fled to Russia and joined the Bolsheviks. The testimony of Janusz was heard in its entirety. In it he described how Emma was helped to escape to Russia. He also testified that Roza had told him about Wolf's brother who lived in Moscow who was a senior officer in the N.K.V.D and that Wolf had travelled several years ago to Moscow to visit him.

Although Wolf pleaded not guilty and that he was loyal to the homeland, it was to no avail. He tried to explain to the court that he had no control

over Emma's actions and that he had learned that she fled only after the fact, since he had severed ties with his brother years before. It all fell on deaf ears. The judge did not accept any of his arguments or explanations.

At the end of the trial Wolf was convicted and received a two-year prison sentence.

Nobody ever saw Janusz again. He disappeared never to be heard from again.

Wolf was imprisoned, fired from his job at the Ministry of Finance, and of course as the adviser to Count Sosnowski. His car was taken from him as well. He was permitted to receive visitors only once a month.

While Wolf was incarcerated, his brother-in-law Stanislaw wrote letters to members of the Polish parliament, outlining the facts of Wolf's imprisonment and compared the trial to the "Dreyfus Trial," that had taken place thirty years before. He listed all the false accusations and that it was all an act of revenge. He threatened to send letters to prominent institutions in other countries and place notices in the foreign press. The pressure and threats bore fruit. After serving one year of his sentence during which he rarely saw his wife and three children, a mistrial was declared and Wolf was granted a retrial.

The retrial was held behind closed doors with only the public defender present. He described the injustice that had been done to Wolf and the damage to his image. Wolf hardly spoke at the trial. He had become thin, pale, and walked with bent shoulders. He had lost all the self confidence which was so characteristic of him.

The retrial was attended by three judges, one of whom was a public figure. They acquitted him of all charges and ruled that he should be

reinstated in his government job, given back his car and be paid compensation for his suffering.

When Wolf returned home, he was no longer the same Wolf who was a lawyer, bridge player, lover of the good life, fond of motorcycles and beautiful women. He was emotionally shattered and depressed and just sat at home and stared at the window for several days.

Lilly would go into his room, sit next to him and read him a story. He would hold her hand as tears streamed down his face.

Ida went to Warsaw with Izio and Davidek to spend some time with her sister. Roza assured her that she would look after Lilly and Wolf. Grandma Paulina also helped by cooking and cleaning and caring for her son's needs.

One day Lolek Bitoft, the son of the pharmacists, appeared at the door. When Lilly opened the door and saw who was there, she froze and both were unable to pronounce any words.

Lolek recovered first, stretched his hand out and said, "Do you not remember me? I am Lolek." Lilly remembered him quite vividly. How could she forget that good looking boy with the golden curls and blue eyes, and two rabbit teeth that adorned his beautiful smile.

The Results

The quiet city of Włoszczowa which lies halfway between Warsaw and Krakow, with Kielce to its east and Częstochowa to its west, and surrounded by dozens of small towns and villages, attracted many new residents. Jews who came from nearby cities moved there and opened new businesses. Two flour mills were built by Jews who came from Łódź, as well as a factory for the production of oil. Due to the high demand, stores and businesses which opened following the Austro-Hungarian occupation, experienced unprecedented abundance. However, several years after the withdrawal, the situation turned around, people became unemployed and stores were forced to close.

More than half the population of the city of Włoszczowa was Jewish. They built a synagogue, founded associations that provided for the needy, youth clubs and schools. Most of the Jews who lived in the center of town were modern Jews and members of the Enlightenment (Reform) movement. They adopted a secular way of life; their children attended public schools and they befriended their Catholic neighbors with whom they lived in harmony. This harmonious relation between the Jewish population and the Polish Catholic population was prevalent mostly in the large cities. That is because these two groups didn't view each other

as being so different since they dressed alike and spoke the same language.

One of the most respected Jews living in Wloszczowa, was Isaac Zaidenbaum, an extremely wealthy businessman. He was shrewd, honest and fair and everybody liked to do business with him. He made his money by selling lumber to furniture manufacturers. He rented entire forests from the municipality, cut the trees down and processed them into boards in the saw mill that he built near the forest. He then sold the boards directly to the furniture factory in Lodz. He transported all the material in a truck that he owned. A year later, he rented an additional forest, this one close to the city of Lodz, and built another saw mill. He thus saved on the cost of transportation.

Isaac had two sons, Simon and Edek. At the age of thirteen, Simon the older one was already working and helping his father in the saw mill. Edek on the other hand was delicate and frail and was not particularly fond of the saw mill. From a young age, he told anybody who was interested in listening to him, that when he grows up he wants to be a doctor.

Simon was the same age as Davidek, while Edek was Lilly's age. When Isaac and his wife, Sarah would come to visit Wolf and Ida, very often they would take their sons along. Lilly did not like any of the two brothers and did not play with them. When Ida would ask her why she did not play with the boys, she replied, "Because when their noses run, they wipe it with their sleeves."

On the other hand, she liked Lolek, and would call him *Loczek* (curl in Polish) because of the eternal curl that hung from his forehead.

Wolf hardly left the house anymore. He refused to return to his previous full time job. However, he resumed working part time for the count. He thus lived off his pension and the little money that he earned from Count Sosnowski.

Davidek would take private violin lessons several times a week and would go by bike to the teacher. One afternoon, a particularly foggy one, Davidek was riding on the gravel road through the woods that led to Count Sosnowski's estate where he was to meet his father, when in a distance he saw burning headlamps of a car. He cycled towards the vehicle and when he got close enough, he noticed that it was his father's car. The engine was running but he didn't see anybody inside.

Davidek got off his bike and peered through the window. He was shocked to see his father lying folded on the seat and not moving. Apparently, Wolf had been driving when suddenly he fainted.

Davidek opened the door of the car and touched his father who felt rather warm but was unconscious. He jumped back on to his bike and flew down the road towards the house to summon help.

As he got closer to town, he met a group of workers returning from their work in the fields and on their way home.

"Please," he yelled excitedly. "You must come to help me. My father is lying unconscious in the car." The workers looked at him apathetically and laughingly said, "Why are you so excited? That means one Jew less."

It was already getting dark as Davidek pedaled towards home as fast as he could. He suddenly noticed a car approaching. He got off his bike and ran into the road waving his hands for the car to stop. It was a stranger who had came to town to visit relatives. Davidek explained to him what

had happened and he immediately told Davidek to get into the car.

When they reached Wolf's car, the two of them put Wolf in the man's car and sped towards the hospital.

"All signs point to a brain hemorrhage, but it is still difficult to determine the extent of the damage," the attending physician who examined Wolf said.

Out of nowhere, Ida suddenly appeared, with Stanislaw and Roza right behind.

When Ida had heard the news, she fell to the floor.

"They killed my husband," she said to Roza. Everybody knew whom she was referring to.

The next few days were the most critical. Wolf did not eat or drink, just lay motionless with his eyes shut and mouth curved. If he had to scratch his nose, he would try to do so by lifting his left hand, which he did with great difficulty. Other than draining his blood several times a day, he received no other treatment.

After about a week he began to mumble, although the words were incomprehensible. Shortly thereafter, he began to write while holding the pencil in his left hand. It was impossible to decipher what he wrote.

Roza and Ida took turns staying with Wolf at the hospital. When eventually the color returned to his cheeks and he stopped complaining about pains, they tried sitting him up in bed by placing large pillows behind his back. However, he was not able to sit straight and always fell to his right, due to the paralysis on that side.

Roza summoned Dr. Herman to the hospital to examine Wolf. Despite the snow covered roads he made the trip from Lodz. After his examination, he confirmed that the treatment Wolf had received was indeed correct, but added that they should immediately begin with physiotherapy. They should start with easy exercises in bed and then take him off the bed and continue the therapy in an armchair. This will strengthen his muscles and ensure the flow of blood in his arms and legs.

Wolf was very weak, uncooperative, and would constantly wave his left hand as if he was chasing flies away. In a inaudible voice, he mumbled fragmented and unintelligible words. When he became frustrated that people did not understand him, he began hitting the iron railing of his bed.

On the tenth day of hospitalization, Roza brought Lilly to visit him. Wolf was sitting in an armchair wearing a fresh pajamas, when she ran up to him and hugged him. A crooked little smile jutted from the corner of his mouth, as he looked at her with loving eyes and said "Lillynka". That was the first complete and understandable word that he uttered since he fell ill.

A few days later, he returned home.

Ida converted his studio which was on the ground floor near the kitchen into his own private bedroom. A physical therapist came every day for one hour and practiced various muscle strengthening exercises with him.

His appetite slowly returned. Ida would say "This is the best sign of recovery." As a result of his lack of movement and his laying in bed all day, he began to gain weight.

Ida instructed the therapist to toughen and strengthen Wolf. That was

indeed what he did, and the results were apparent almost immediately. With the help of a cane, he began to walk a little. Although his right hand was folded down towards his body and his leg was very weak, he was able to walk again and balance himself. His speech also slowly began coming back to him. It seemed that Wolf was on his way to recovery.

Lilly's Objection

Lilly was not happy attending the girl's school number two. She wanted to go to the class in school number one, where her neighbor and good friend Bozena Smirdnowna attended. Her request was denied because she was Jewish.

Lilly rebelled, and one day came into the classroom in school number one and sat down next to Bozena. When the teacher noticed her sitting in the classroom, he walked up to her and just stood there staring at her. The class fell silent waiting to see what would happen. Lilly lifted her head and looked directly into the teacher's eyes that was standing right in front of her and waited for him to speak. Lilly did not blink just stared back at him.

'How is your father?' he asked.

"He is making steady progress. Everything will be fine," she answered.

She knew that his questioning would not end at this time, so she pre-

empted him and aggressively asked, "Is there a problem if I want to attend your class?"

"We will have to speak to the principal. Meantime, you can stay in the class for this lesson," he replied. Lilly then rose from her seat and announced, "I will go back to my original school. I realize that I am embarrassing some of you". She then walked to the door and left.

That evening there was a knock at the door. When Ida opened the door, there stood the teacher, who asked, "May I enter?"

Lilly opened the door of her bedroom that she shared with Davidek to see who had come. As soon as she saw the guest, she locked herself in the room. Fortunately the teacher did not ask to see her and was probably even pleased that she remained in her room.

"I came to apologize for the shameful incident that occurred at school today" he began. "I am not a politician and I do not make the decisions about prohibitions and restrictions. I am a teacher and an educator. I have come to express my opinion about the situation. I am unequivocally against the banning of Jewish student from the school. However, since I am a law abiding public servant and a man of order, I must accept the ruling and adhere to it."

Ida, who thought that he had come to discuss Lilly's rejection by the principal from attending the school, waved a hand dismissively and said, "We are used to all types of discriminations and restrictions leveled against us. It seems that we are destined to be second class citizens."

She then complimented the teacher and said, "It is nice to know that there are still honest and brave Poles around like you."

The guest cleared his throat and said, "I am not brave. I will only voice my objection in your house. I would not dare mention it anyplace else."

As he descended the stairs, he turned around to Ida and said, "Lilly is a brave girl." Ida, who did not know about the incident, had no idea what the teacher was referring to. Later that evening at dinner, Lilly told Ida and Grandma Paulina what had taken place at school.

The next day, Lilly returned to her class. She especially liked geography lessons. She loved to show off to her friends during quizzes where she solve questions like, "In which country is Paris?" or "Which river crosses Florence?" She nearly always rejected the answer given by her peers, especially when she was right, thus placing her friends in embarrassing situations for several seconds. Then, with her infectious laugh she would shout "ten points for me."

There was no greater joy then when Aunt Roza suggested to Lilly and Davidek that she would take them to Warsaw to visit their aunt Cesia and uncle Moses. Lilly dressed in festive clothes, put on her lacquered red shoes that her father had bought her on one of his trips. She even wrapped a small gift for one year old Jerzy in brown paper. She was so excited about going that she sat in Wolf's room all ready for hours before they were bound to leave.

By early afternoon, Roza came to pick up the children. Ida went to talk to Roza and the two stood at the gate for a long time and talked. Ida spoke in a very animated fashion and it was clear that she was very excited about something. The excitement was because she was trying to impress upon Roza the importance of delivering a message to their sister Cesia about Davidek's future. Ida really wanted him to study in Warsaw and perhaps continue there in university. "Here in Wloszczowa, his future is

rather bleak. All we have here are cobblers, carpenters, butchers and horse thieves. There is no future for him here," she remarked.

The driver of the Zaidenbaum family was coming to pick them up and take them to Kielce, where they were going to take the train for Warsaw.

As they waited at their door, Lolek passed by on his bicycle. He looked at Lilly as if he was hypnotized and turned his head back as he passed by, without noticing the pot hole in the road. He was thrown off his bicycle and fell into the nearby puddle. Lilly burst out into a roaring laugh while Lolek who was embarrassed sat in the water with his head bowed.

Roza who saw what had happened, ran up to him and asked, "Are you okay, young boy? Are you hurt?" Lolek did not answer, as tears of pain and shame ran down his cheeks. Roza helped him out of the water and brought him his bike. He thanked her and went home limping.

When Roza returned, the driver was already waiting. They got into the car and drove off. On the way, Roza scolded Lilly for her malicious behavior. "I actually happen to like him. It was just so funny," she said, with a sly smile all over her face.

The Visit to Warsaw

It was after midnight when the train arrived at Warsaw train station. Roza dragged Davidek and Lilly, who were half asleep, off the train and onto the platform where Cesia was waiting for them with a driver, who in one hand carried Lilly and in the other lifted the suitcase. Roza and

Cesia supported Davidek who was sleep-walking and swaying like a drunkard.

When Davidek woke the next morning, he did not know where he was. Adam ran up to him and hugged him. "Davidek, I'm so glad that you came," he said. A bashful Davidek smiled modestly. He liked his red-headed cousin who was the same age as him but already a head taller.

Lilly also appeared in the room and ran to Adam and embraced him. Now it was Adam's turn to be embarrassed. His face turned red and he barely looked at her. Lilly jumped all over him, nearly knocking him down. "Okay, okay. Enough already, stop" he pleaded.

After Lilly and Davidek had settled in, Cesia called them to eat. "Where is Jerzy"? Lilly and Davidek asked simultaneously. "He is still napping in my bed," Cesia answered. "That is where he sleeps when we give his room to guests."

Cesia and Moses Wolowelski lived in a large apartment in one of the buildings that Moses owned on Ogrodowa Street. He had combined two apartments on the second floor and made one out of them. In one part he built an office for himself with an adjoining bedroom and on the other part he built a huge living room, a dining room along with a fully equipped kitchen. All the floors were covered with expensive Afghan rugs. Enormous chandeliers hung from the center of each room with paintings mounted in carved wooden frames hanging on the walls. Two life-size bronze statues were placed at the exit to the back porch. The tablecloths were embroidered with gold and silver threads. Everything pointed to great wealth.

Lilly and Davidek were fascinated. They stood in awe of everything they

saw.

The Wolowelskis spent their weekends at their home in Michalin, which actually was a large villa built on a hill surrounded by tall white birch trees. Moses owned two cars; one a family car and one a convertible spots car.

At their home in Michalin, they had an array of bicycles in different sizes and for different genders. Because she was short, Lilly had difficulty getting on a bike because she could not reach the pedals. As a result she fell and injured her elbow on the first try.

Two friendly German shepherds ran around in the garden playing with the children as they ran after the balls the boys kicked.

Along the wall that surrounded the villa, there were pear and cherry trees along with blueberry bushes that grew wildly.

Moses Wolowelski, who was a red head and had a face full of freckles, always dressed elegantly, wearing cream-colored or white suits and a striped visor hat. He conveyed an aura of strength and power. Although he had a serious and sometimes angry look on his face, he was the most lovable person.

While Moses worked in his office, Cesia would take the children to Park Lazienki, where they would stroll around the lake and throw pieces of bread to the white swans that were paddling in the water.

Roza and Cesia enjoyed just sitting on one of the many benches scattered along the paths. Lilly loved sitting on the bench next to her aunts, curiously observing the elegantly dressed women as they passed by. She was particularly intrigued by their strange looking hats, many of which

were adorned with long colorful feathers or with tulle that hid half their faces. She was most fascinated by the fox fur stoles that hung from the shoulders of the fancy women and flapped back and forth as they walked. This was high fashion and how the high society in the big town dressed.

"When I grow up, I want to perform in the Warsaw theatre in Shakespeare's play Hamlet, in the role of the Danish noblewoman Ophelia, sister of Laertes and potential wife of Prince Hamlet. I will then dress in beautiful clothes with a fox scarf hanging from my shoulders. I will be the most famous and admired star of the Warsaw theatre," Lilly declared loudly.

"You will first have to wait for your breasts to grow," Roza remarked in her casual manner.

"That is no way to speak to a little girl who is barely eleven years old," grumbled Cesia.

A few days after their arrival in Warsaw, Moses took Davidek (who requested that he be called David in front of others) to the local high school, the same one Adam attended.

On the wall calendar that hung above the head secretary, the date September 1st was circled in red with the words "the first day of classes" written alongside it.

"Here is Davidek, your new student," Moses loudly declared in his booming voice.

The secretary looked up, smiled and said, "Remind me what your full name is."

"My name is David Nachimzon. I was born in Warsaw in June, 25th, 1912."

"We have one mixed class, Jews and non-Jews together, and one for Jews only. Which do you prefer," the secretary asked.

"I would prefer to go to the mixed class. I do not want to learn in a class with only Jews. I would like to learn in a class with my cousin Adam."

Suddenly Lilly piped up and began to cry and said, "I also want to attend school in Warsaw. I do not want to go back to Wloszczowa."

David walked over to her and put his hand on her shoulder to comfort her."Don't worry, Lilly, I will be coming often to visit you and you will come to visit me on your vacations. Do not worry, we will not be separated for long."

Lilly grabbed his arm and held it tightly, and said, "Promise me that we will see each other often."

Aunt Cesia promised Lilly that she would spend the following summer in Warsaw together with David and Adam. Lilly jumped up and down from joy and hugged Cesia tightly and kissed her.

"Not only that, but I bought you a pair of earrings," Cesia said, as she handed Lilly a small box decorated with a silver ribbon. Lilly quickly opened the box and there before her eyes she saw a pair of gold earrings in the shape of a chain with a blue stone set in each earring."Aunt Cesia, I love you," she said, as she jumped on her once again. This time there were tears of joy in her eyes.

The next morning Aunt Roza and Lilly took the train to Kielce and from there they took a bus to Wloszczowa.

As soon as she got home, Lilly rushed up the stairs and burst into the

room of her grandmother, Paulina."Grandma, Grandma, look what Aunt Cesia bought for me," and she pulled her hair away from her ears to reveal the earrings.

"Now you are ready to look for a husband," grandmother laughed."That's right, a husband. Perhaps I should marry a young yeshiva boy. After all, they get married at fifteen. Don't they?" Lilly replied laughingly.

Grandmother suddenly turned serious and grabbed Lilly grabbed by her hand and said, "Just don't bring home a Pole." Lilly stroked her grandmother's white hair, leaned over and kissed her cheek and asked, "What is wrong with a Pole?"

On Christmas Eve 1927, Lilly celebrated her twelfth birthday. As in years past at, the church bells rang to mark the beginning of the holiday. The year's first snow was falling, and through the windows of the houses, sparkling holiday trees with multicolored flashing lights and candles could be seen.

Ida baked Lilly's favorite cake, an apple strudel. Aunt Roza came with Eugenia and her husband Stanislaw, as well as Uncle Muniek, who came with a wrapped package in one hand and a bottle in the other. The entire family sat down around the large table.

Little Izio was running among the guests and shouting, "Where is Videk? Where is Videk?" He was looking for his older brother, Davidek, who was not there because he had gone with the Wolowelsi family to the mountains. Every year during the holiday season they rented a small house in Zakopane. Moses loved to slide in the snow while Adam and David pushed a sled in which two-year-old exuberant Jerzy was sitting.

As soon as all the lights in the room were off, Lilly blew out the candle

burning in the center of the cake. That was when all at once everybody broke out in the famous Polish birthday song.

Hundred years, hundred years,

May she live, live just for us.

Hundred years, hundred years,

May she live, live just for us.

Once again, once again,

May she live, live just for us.

May she live, just for us.

While everybody was busy talking and drinking, Uncle Muniek stood up, waving his hand in which he was holding an empty glass of vodka. Everybody started laughing at him, but the expression on his face was very serious.

As soon as the room fell silent, he began speaking.

"First of all I would like to bless the sweet, talented and funny Lilly whom I love so much. I wish her all the best luck in the world. Now I will tell you something that is news to all of you. I have decided to leave Poland and to emigrate to Argentina. Although Uncle Lazer with whom I have been corresponding lives in Houston, Texas, and has asked me to join him, I recently made contact with a group of Polish Jews who live in Argentina, and they suggest that I join them. They have opened a dental clinic and are desperately looking for a technician like myself. I think it is right for me to try my luck there."

Total silence reigned in the room, as everyone sat quietly and looked at each other, unable to respond. Ida walked over to her brother, hugged him and said "So you are leaving us just like Lazer, Isabella and Emma." Tears ran down her cheeks as she stormed out of the room.

Everybody sat in silence. Muniek tried to be funny, but nobody laughed. Finally Wolf broke the silence and said, "May your way be successful. You have my blessing." He went over to Muniek and they shook hands warmly. Then Roza went over to him, hugged him and said, "It's a good thing that our parents are no longer alive. Papa would not have approved of what you are doing."

Stanislaw, who was standing next to Roza, added, "If I had a choice, I would also leave. Many young people have signed up and joined newly established organizations, especially the Zionist ones that train young people in different professions and then send them to Palestine. There is a group of thirty people already.

"I would not go to Palestine for any money in the world," Wolf said. "We have a good life right here in Poland. We are Polish, and whoever has a bit of brains in his head can manage very well here."

"How will they call you in Argentina, Manuel Friedberg?" Stanislaw laughingly commented.

"Just make sure you stay in touch with us. I do not want to lose you," said Eugenia.

Ida came back into the room with red eyes. Muniek walked over to her, hugged her and said. "My dearest sister, I'm here alone, I have no wife or children. If things do not work out for me there, I can always come back. If things work out fine, perhaps you will come and join me. Buenos Aires

is not Włoszczowa. In the letters that I receive from my friends, they describe the most amazing places and the most amazing and friendly people. The climate is warm and pleasant. Do not be upset, it causes me anguish and distresses."

Ida tried to put a smile on her face.

A Sympathetic Ear

On one of his infrequent visits to his parents, David and the family went to see a school performance in which Lilly had a leading role.

It seemed that Wolf was slowly getting back to himself, as this was the first time he had been out without his cane.

David was genuinely impressed by his younger sister, who suddenly had grown into a beautiful and talented girl. She walked about the stage so naturally with such poise, and recited texts brilliantly without a single mistake and with much feeling.

After the show, the family members stood up and applauded her for a long time. David was extremely proud of his sister. When they met backstage he ran to embrace her and compliment her on her

performance. Lilly expressed great happiness that he had come to see her perform.

That night at dinner, while they were all sitting around the table and talking, David raised the issue of discrimination against Jews at the university.

Wolf, who did not like to hear those arguments, kept repeating, "Stop complaining. Despite all, you have completed high school and were accepted by the university."

"I am a Polish citizen and have rights. They must let me study at the university," replied David. Thus the debate continued throughout the meal.

"Look what happened when the Austro-Hungarians came," said Wolf, "they canceled all the restrictive and discriminatory laws against the Jews."

Slamming his hand angrily on the table, he continued, "After they left and the Republic of Poland was established, the Poles adopted and continued with all the benefits that we received. So what are you complaining about?"

Everyone suddenly fell silent, as Paulina, who was sitting at the head of the table, waved her hand and said, "Enough with politics already. Relax and eat. We Jews are approximately twenty percent of the population and it is impossible to ignore our existence and impose discriminatory laws against us."

Ida served steaming borscht. "This is in honor of Davidek" she said.

"Hopefully, he will come more often," Lilly added laughingly.

Early the next morning, David and Lilly went out bike riding in town. They rode along the main road until they turned off onto a trail that led to a newly planted grove. They rode for a few hundred meters and stopped. They left their bicycles on the wet grass while they found a dry log and sat down.

Davidek began by asking Lilly, "Lilly, tell me a little about what you do? Are you seeing anybody? How do you find father's health?"

"Actually I thought you would tell me all about Warsaw and the girls you have met," Lilly responded.

"I will tell you," Davidek replied. "I really do not have much free time, as I spend most of it studying. I did however, work for a short while at Uncle Elia, where I met Stefania and Mila. Stefania will be getting married in the near future and Mila, although beautiful, is still rather young.

I do have a girlfriend whom I met in high school. We meet each other every now and then, but I have no intention of getting married just yet."

"What is her name?" Lilly asked.

"Klara" he answered.

"Is she Jewish?" she questioned.

"Yes. Does it really make a difference?" Davidek replied.

"No, not really. I just asked out of curiosity," was her reply.

Davidek then became philosophical and asked, "Would it bother anybody if she were a Polish Catholic girl?"

"But you said she was Jewish, did you not?" Lilly commented.

"Yes, she is Jewish," he answered.

"I would never go out with a man who is not Jewish," Lilly suddenly blurted out.

"Since when did that matter to you so much," he asked.

"Society still does not accept mixed marriages and whoever does so, suffers from both sides," she explained.

"It may be true in a small town like Włoszczowa, but in Warsaw it is quite acceptable. There are many mixed marriages and nobody seems to mind," he answered.

"What about the children? They certainly must identify with somebody," she asked

"Now you are touching upon very difficult and sensitive matter. I really did not delve into the matter so deeply. Now tell me, Lilly, with whom do you spend your time?" Davidek asked.

"I will tell you something, but only if you swear not to talk to anybody about it," she said. "Promise me."

"I swear not to talk to anybody about it," David replied, and made the three-fingered scouts sign when he recited the promise.

"Lolek, the pharmacist's son is in love with me. He sends me notes through one of the girls during recess at school, and sometimes comes to our home to help mother with Izio, so that he can be close to me."

"What do you say to him?" David asked.

"I am evasive and unresponsive, as I do not want him think that I am

interested in him," she answered.

"Why are you not interested in him? He's good looking, is blond with blue eyes and comes from a respectable family," David replied anxiously awaiting her response.

"Did I not tell you that I would not go out with anybody who is not Jewish," Lilly replied.

"Next time I come, we will take along food and spend the day along the river at Maluszyn. Do you remember when we were young we would spend a lot of time there in the white sand at the beautiful beach?" David reminisced.

"Sure I remember. We were there several summers with our friends. Those summers were great. I remember that we rented boats and sailed up and down the river," Lilly mused.

"In that case, we are fixed for the next time I come," David said.

"Confirmed," she replied with a big smile on her face.

David was Lilly's big brother, friend and confidant. He was the brother she loved, the brother she worshiped and everything he said was important to her. Although Lilly was also very close to her father, he was not a friend, he was a father; a man of authority and head of the family. She could not confide in him about the personal feelings that were in her heart. She also found it difficult to confide in her mother, Ida. If at all, it was easier for her to talk to her unmarried Aunt Roza, or her beloved Uncle Stanislaw. For David she had an extra soft spot in her heart, and she knew that in time of need he would always be on her side.

Christmas, Chanukah and a Birthday

When the Christmas season arrived, the municipal workers would decorate Rynek Square with Christmas trees, with multi-colored oil lamps hanging from the branches that danced in the blowing wind. The children would run between the trees and throw snowballs at passersby.

Even among the Jewish residents there was a holiday atmosphere, because the Gregorian date of the birthday of Jesus coincided with the Jewish date of Chanukah, which commemorates the miracle that took place in the Holy Temple when the Greeks destroyed it. After the Jews had defeated the Greek army, the priests wanted to light the menorah once again. However, they found only enough oil to last for one day. A miracle occurred and the oil lasted for eight days, until new oil could be obtained. The holiday of Chanukah commemorates that miracle and in Jewish homes the menorah is lit for eight days.

On that festive evening, Wolf, who was not at all religious decided to place a menorah in the window of his house. That afternoon he went to

the market to walk around the shops. He visited the department store owned by the Zaidenbaums. Although they did not deal in religious articles, the grandfather, who was religious and sported a long white beard, was thrilled to see a Jewish man wanting to borrow a menorah. Wolf received a menorah along with eight candles. He decided to light all eight candles the first night and not the traditional way of adding a candle every night.

As he was leaving, he heard loud laughter coming from the Zaidenbaum sons when they were told of the nature of Wolf's visit and his interesting request.

From Zaidenbaum department store, he turned into one of the narrow streets that connect Rynek along the southern side with the town of Maluszyn. At the corner of the street there was a lovely brick house in front of which there was a long room with a large display window facing the front. The building was occupied by the Lewita family, who for generations were known as master jewelers and watchmakers. Wolf knocked on the front door, which was always locked, and after a minute Leib Lewita opened the door.

"Advocat Wolf, what an honor. What brings you here?" he asked.

"Today is my daughter Lilly's fourteenth birthday and I would very much like to buy her a piece of jewelry," he answered.

The jeweler took a wooden box and spread out its contents in front of Wolf. There were all kinds of earrings; pearl earrings, gold earrings, silver earrings and gemstone-studded earrings as well as all kinds of necklaces.

Wolf stared in amazement at the assortment and became totally

confused.

"Perhaps, Mr. Lewita, you can help me chose," Wolf began. "I'm not good at choosing. Pick out a nice necklace with a stone for me; one that will match my daughter's earnings." He then began to describe the earrings that Lilly had received as a gift from her aunt.

Mr. Lewita took out a gold necklace with a shiny round pearl hanging from it.

"This will match," he said. He then put the necklace into a small box, wrapped it and put a ribbon around it.

"I am sorry, but I must close the store now since the holiday is approaching and we still haven't made "latkes" (potato pancakes) and donuts for the children who are coming to visit us this evening," Lewita explained as he escorted Wolf to the door.

Wolf went out and headed for home. "Latkes, donuts, what else do I need? Is there anything I have forgotten?" he thought to himself.

Higher Learning

David loved everything about the life in Warsaw, but most of all he loved

the fact that he was with his cousin Adam, whom he loved as a brother. They spent most of their time together. Whenever David went back to Włoszczowa to visit his family, Adam would accompany him to the train station and wait until the train departed.

On days when they had no school, they rode their bikes to nearby Saski Park, where they used to find a quiet corner and smoke cigarettes that Adam had "stolen" from the silver cigarette holder that was on his father's desk in the office.

Adam was full of life full , energy and self-confidence. "I will be the most important and well-known doctor in all of Warsaw," he would tell anyone who was willing to listen. It worked especially well with the young girls they would meet in the park.

David, on the other hand, was introverted, shy and quiet, and always stayed in the background. Adam would always try to get the girls interested in him. When a group of girls came over to talk to Adam, he would try to introduce David to them. Adam would chat with them, put his hands on their shoulders and bring them over to David. He always wondered what Adam told them about him.

Adam applied to the most prestigious medical school in Warsaw. The following week an official letter arrived from the school, which his mother handed to him at dinner. He opened it, took one look at its contents when his face turned red and he started cursing, "*Psia krew cholera* (damn despicable bitches), they should all go to hell, those anti-Semitic swines." He threw the letter on the table and locked himself in his room.

Moses asked to see the letter and read it out loud.

Dear Mr. Adam Wolowelski,

We are sorry to inform you that although with your exemplary grades you should have been accepted to our school, but since the number of Jewish candidates exceeds ten percent of our total enrollment, we must deny your admittance at this time. You can reapply once again for the next academic year.

Now it was Moses' turn to fume with anger. Both he and Adam had the same character; both had short fuses and made rash, quick decisions.

"Adam is going to study medicine in Italy and will return to Poland as a specialist," Moses proclaimed. "I have a friend whose son graduated from the University of Modena and has very good connections there. I will arrange everything tomorrow. Too bad he will lose a year, but if I contribute enough money to the university, they will accept him. I have absolutely no intention of contributing money to a university that discriminates against Jews. This is blatant anti-Semitism directed by the government."

He then turned to David and said, "Tell Adam to come back now to the dinner table and finish his supper."

True to his word, the next morning Moses and Adam were on the train for the three-day journey to Modena. Cesia tried in vain to console her nephew Davidek, by telling him that time passes quickly, and even predicted that Adam would study in Modena for no longer than one year and then come back to Warsaw to continue with his studies.

David knew otherwise. Two days after the hasty departure of his cousin and best friend, Adam, David went looking to rent a small apartment so that he could be on his own a little. On Nowo Lipki Street he found a studio apartment, albeit a small one with the toilets in the hall shared by all the apartments on the floor. At least he was on his own, independent and not in the custody of Moses or Cesia. He felt like a free man; a first-year student of dentistry.

During the first week of his studies, David found new friends. His attempts at befriending non-Jewish Polish students were unsuccessful. He didn't succeed in exchanging more than a superficial greeting with them. The Jewish students welcomed him with open arms, despite the fact that they were a bit suspicious seeing his attempts to befriend the Polish students.

When the Jewish students were told that the last three rows in the lecture hall were designated for them and that they were prohibited from mingling with the Polish students, David joined the other Jewish students and mounted a protest. They stood for the entire lecture and refused to sit in the seats assigned to them.

The university administration was not bothered by the incident. As a matter of fact it really did not care.

That was, until a faculty member named Jan Minkiewicz, a professor of chemistry, identified with the Jewish students. To show his solidarity he gave his lecture while standing in the back of the hall together with the Jewish students. His action was received with boos and whistles from every corner of the auditorium. As a result, Professor Jan Minkiewicz was never again seen at the university.

David found some new friends at the university, Kalman Baranowski and Mina Halpern.

Two weeks later, when he was at his uncle's house to spend some time with Cesia and little Jerzy, his aunt handed him a letter that had arrived for him at the house.

Dear David,

I finally settled down in this wonderful Garden of Eden. It is not in vain that they say that Italians are beautiful; they are also angelic, gentle, charming and graceful. I have not learned any Italian yet, other than a few phrases such as, "Ti amo" or "sei bella." Classes in the university have only just begun. The campus is right next door to where I live. I live with an Italian family who has a beautiful daughter around my age. Her name is Roselina, but her mother calls her Rosie. We smile at each other all the time, but in the meantime I only kiss her in my dreams.

In class we have begun learning about the human anatomy. The professor brought to class a disassembled skeleton and each one of us got a bone. I received a hand. Who knows if it is not the hand of a beautiful girl? And what did she do with the hand?

The Italian students are very sociable and welcomed me with open arms. They "Italianized" my name and call me Adamo. I love the song "O Sole Mio" by Enrico Caruso. He is the artist who died about ten years ago. As far as the Italians go, they like wine, cigarettes and dancing. The thing I have

in common with them is my love for la Dolce Vita. It seems I was born in Russia by mistake.

My dear cousin, please write to me. How are things with you? How are your studies? Do you miss me? Give my darling Lilly kisses from me.

Adamo.

It was primarily on Sunday that David really felt alone. The entire week he was busy with his studies, as after the lectures he sat at home and studied until very late. Once a month he would travel for the weekend to Włoszczowa, but all other weekends he would spend at home resting and thinking. Some weekends he would meet with Kalman and Mina. Although they were friends, they were not always interested in getting together with him, as they were busy with each other.

David began dating Klara whom he actually knew from high school and had become a close friend of Mina. She was a philosophy student at the University of Warsaw. Although she was not at all gorgeous and perhaps even a bit too skinny for his taste, nevertheless, she had a certain charm about her, a beautiful smile and large shining eyes. The fact that she was a year older than he was, did not bother him much. As their relationship warmed, Klara began spending nights at David's apartment from time to time and even invited him to visit her parents.

David refused to meet Klara's parents, because he knew that meeting them indicated a binding commitment and he was not ready for that. Although Klara was upset with David, she did not leave him.

One day she surprised him when unbeknownst to him, she invited her

parents to a café, where only the two of them were supposed to meet.

Klara's parents were very kind to David, especially when they realized that he was Jewish and a student of dentistry. Her father, an independent lawyer, was tall and thin, fair-haired and his speech was short and very businesslike. Her mother was heavy set, not very pretty with coarse facial expressions and a loud voice. She was excessively curious, bordering on the ridiculous. Every question that she asked began with the phrase "If I may ask you." She would then ask questions such as, "Where do your parents live? What does your father do? Did they originally come from Russia? What Jewish groups are you affiliated with?" This went on until Klara reprimanded her and told her to stop. Otherwise this line of questioning would never have ceased.

Klara's parents lived in the Praga quarter of Warsaw in a small single-family house with a large back yard. In the quarter there were many factories and workshops. The factory of the finest and best-known vodka produced in Poland, owned by a Jewish family, was located there. There were also many private residences there, as well as a synagogue. The part of the quarter, located in the other side of the Vistula River, did not attract many Jews, and that was where Klara's parents lived. Since her father represented many Jewish and Polish owned factories in the area, he decided to live in close proximity to them and set up a small office there.

Klara's grandfather, whose original surname was Finkler, officially changed his name to Feinski. As a result when her Klara's father was born, he was named Zbigniew Feinski, a real Polish name.

David very much disliked those people who pretended to be Poles and tried to hide their Jewish identity. He was not opposed to enlightenment

and assimilation, he just did not like the impersonation. He claimed to welcome progress and the desire to learn and influence, but not to dress up and impersonate the Poles.

Klara was an only child, and therefore her parents took extra care of her and feared lest she got caught up in some communist or revisionist ideology and vanish to Palestine or in one of the communes in the wilderness of Mother Russia. They therefore welcomed her relationship with David even if it was not a serious one on his part. David was prepared to accept this relationship as he was not ready for any type of commitment.

In the second year of his studies, David frequently visited his uncle Dr. Ilia Friedberg, a respected and well-known dentist. His patient list included celebrities, and important public people. He had a reputation as an excellent dentist and his clinic was considered the most sought after among the influential people in Warsaw.

David would stand alongside him and assist him in his work, all the while observing his handiwork, whether it was a difficult and complicated tooth extraction or a tooth restoration. Ilia occasionally gave David the option of treating a patient.

Noblesse Oblige

Many times on his frequent visits to Maluszyn, Wolf would take Lilly along and leave her with Anya, daughter of his artist friend Boris Nikolai who lived and worked in the town. Lilly was familiar with the town because that was where they went swimming on hot summer days, in the Pilica River.

The one place in the town that she had never been to was the estate of Count Jan Sosnowski, and Wolf had promised her that he would take her there some time. On this trip he decided to fulfill his promise and take her there.

The estate was neglected; even the lawn and the rose garden had seen better days. Over the years, many of the residents of the estate had been members of the Polish aristocracy. The economic situation and the invasion of the German army had taken a toll on the current residents and they were forced to live very modestly with a limited income.

When Count Jan Sosnowski saw their vehicle stop at the house he opened the door for them himself with his wife Countess Janina standing next to him. Wolf and Lilly climbed out of their vehicle, and approached entrance.

"Boze moj," Lilly remarked in astonishment when she saw the size of the place as they entered the inner courtyard. Lilly, who was at a loss as what to do, bowed. Janina approached her, shook her hand and said, "There is no need to do that. We are people just like you. Those days are gone." Wolf kissed the hand of Countess Janina and asked, "How are things?" He did not expect to get an answer, just a cold smile. Countess Janina, had no special affection for the Jews, restrained herself and

received Wolf warmly according to the instructions of her husband. After all, Wolf was his financial adviser and helped him retain his estate and the land.

As they moved from room to room on their way to the reception area, Lilly took note of the peeling walls, the bare floors and the lack of furniture. She later found out that the expensive carpeting and heavy style furniture had been sold off to raise much needed cash. She also noticed the lack of domestic help in the house.

While sitting in the large reception room, her father and the count moved off to the side, sat at a small table near the porch and began speaking in whispers to each other. Lilly walked around the room and marveled at the ancient paintings that hung from the walls, the crystal chandeliers that descended from the high ceiling and at the giant marble fireplace in the center of the wall in which a fire burned slowly. She just stood there thrilled to tears and thought to herself, "Who is going to believe me when I tell them that I was in the mansion of the count and sat in his company."

The countess' dog, a Doberman Pincher puppy, came into the room. He responded to the gestures that Lilly made to him and he slowly approached her. He wagged his tail with delight as she petted him and even lay on his back so that she could scratch his stomach. They got along wonderfully. That was until Countess Janina came into the room called, "Knish, come to mama." The puppy ran to the countess, who quickly shut the door behind her.

"Knish," Lilly laughed. "Isn't that a type of potato-filled pastry? What kind of name is that to give a dog?"

"I wonder how much time she spent coming up with that name," she

thought to herself.

The conversation between Wolf and the count came to an end. They both looked very pleased and shook hands warmly.

On their way out, Lilly glanced into a room and saw a girl about her age lying on a bed covered with a blanket while a nurse in white draped a towel over her forehead.

"Who was that girl? What is wrong with her?" Lilly quizzed her father as they drove back home to Wloszczowa.

"She is Bozena, the count's daughter. She is the same age as you are and is very ill with an incurable disease. Doctors from all over Europe have examined her and no treatment seems to do any good. Her parents have spent a fortune on medication, however, now due to their financial situation they can no longer afford to continue with the treatment," Wolf told Lilly.

"If so, she will die without treatment," Lilly commented.

"The treatment did not cure her, only prolonged her life for a bit. It is now two months that she has not gotten off her bed," Wolf said with sadness in his voice.

"May I visit her and try to cheer her up?" Lilly asked.

"I do not think it is a good idea," Wolf replied, "but I promise to ask the count on my next visit."

Bozena died a week later. The funeral was held in the grounds of the estate in the family burial plot. The count requested that people refrain from coming to pay condolence calls.

The Concert

The local cinema served as both a theatre and as a concert hall which occasionally showed movies featuring Claudette Colbert or Jean Harlow and at times even a Polish or Yiddish production.

This time, something different was coming to the theatre in the form of a live concert from London that was going to be broadcast. Wolf promised his mother and his children that he would take them to the performance.

Izio and Lilly were ready on time, dressed in their best festive clothes.

Wolf wore a white suit with gray stripes, a bow tie and his black top hat. His mother Paulina wore a black lace dress with embroidered flowers held together on top with her gold pin.

At precisely quarter to six in the evening, they left the house to walk to the cinema. As Wolf had reserved and paid for front row seats in advance, he did not have to wait on the long line that had formed. Upon his arrival, he walked straight to the front of the line.

Upon entering the auditorium he noticed that only the back half was occupied and realized that they started seating the people from the rear. Finally the people sitting in the front rows began to enter and were permitted to take their seats. Wolf knew quite a few people in the audience, and he had to get up from time to time to greet some of them.

At six thirty the bell that hung in the waiting room chimed three times.

An usher made an announcement that everyone should please be seated as the concert was set to begin in a few minutes.

At a quarter to seven an usher went up on stage and turned on the radio that was sitting on a tall, narrow table with loudspeakers on either side. In the background music from a string instrument could be heard, indicating that the concert was about to begin.

The crowd fell silent and all eyes were focused on the device on stage emitting shrill squeaking noises.

The usher once again went up on stage to try to improve the quality of transmission. He moved the antenna located at the back of the radio in different directions, and the quality of the sound did indeed improve.

The booming voice of the English announcer proclaimed the beginning of a concert of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, live from the Royal Albert Hall and broadcast via the BBC.

"The concert, Vivaldi's symphony, conducted by Arturo Toscanini, the famous Italian conductor, will now begin," he announced.

The lights were dimmed and the concert began. The silence in the hall was broken at times by the sound of a harsh, persistent and irritating cough that emanated from the rear. After loud complaints from the audience the man was forced to leave the hall until the cough abated and he relaxed a bit.

Izio and Lilly demonstrated their impatience by moving around in their seats and shuffling their feet. After a while they started talking to each others in whispers. Wolf reprimanded them and told them to keep quiet.

Paulina, whose brother Julius was the conductor of the Vienna

Philharmonic and a famous pianist and composer was ecstatic. The look on her face left no doubt how much she loved the concert. With her eyes closed, she waved her thin arms as if she were holding a baton and conducting the orchestra.

After an hour of visible suffering, Lilly tried to drag Izio out and into the hallway. He was actually beginning to enjoy the concert, and did not want to go, however, he finally gave in to her and together they left.

"Father will be angry at us. After all he paid for expensive front row seats," Izio said, "Let's go back in."

"You can go back in, but I am going home," Lilly replied.

"There is no way that I will let you walk home alone in the dark. Let me tell father that we are going home," Izio said.

Izio tiptoed into the hall and walked up to the front row, leaned over to his father and whispered into his ear, "Lilly does not feel well, women's problems. I am accompanying her home."

Wolf nodded in agreement. Just then, the concert ended, and a thunderous applause could be heard from the crowd. Izio quickly ran out, grabbed Lilly's hand and said, "Come, the nightmare is over."

Immature Love

Lolek had become part of Lilly's family. Every evening on his way home from high school, he would stop at her house, supposedly to help Ida with her shopping and to play with Izio. Everyone knew of his real intention; to see Lilly. Nevertheless, they kept quiet and just smiled. Wolf, who was not very fond of Lolek, did not like the fact that that nine-year-old Izio had a friend seven years older than he was. Wolf, however, did not find the time to discuss it with Izio, since he was always busy at work and came home very late.

Sometime later, he had a suspicion that Lolek was interested in Lilly. He hoped that she would reject him and that he would finally disappear. It did not happen.

Lolek began to openly woo Lilly and even began bringing her little gifts. He once brought her a red knitted sock filled with a variety of sweets and chocolates tied with a green ribbon on top with a red heart attached to it.

On another occasion he bought her a live white rabbit which he purchased in the market. Once, while they were strolling along the Pilica River, he bought her a striped swimsuit.

Lilly willingly accepted the gifts and was happy with her good fortune. Although she confided in her uncle Stanislaw that Lolek was wooing her and buying her gifts, she immediately dismissed it as puppy love.

"I am not interested in him. I am flattered that he buys me gifts, but it is only out of friendship," Lilly said.

Stanislaw pleaded with her to refuse any more gifts."He's in love with you, and it will be very difficult for him to accept a rejection. Do not give

him false hopes," he said.

"Uncle Staczek" she said, using the name affectionately, "Do not worry, I'm a big girl and know what I am doing."

In school, Lilly told her Jewish friends that she had a Polish boy friend, something none of them had. She walked around like a proud peacock with her head held high and showed off her small breasts like a flirtatious woman. At times she would put on lipstick and rouge on her cheeks. The girls were jealous of her and saw her as a leader worthy of following.

Once in the middle of a lesson, she wanted to pass a note to a friend sitting in the next row. Unfortunately, the note fell on the floor and the girl behind her picked it up and read it out loud.

"Yesterday Lolek hugged me," she began to read. "He kissed me on my lips while inserting his tongue into my mouth."

Lilly blushed as everybody stared at her. The teacher approached her and in a loud voice said, "What is going on here?"

Everyone fell silent, as Lilly got out of her seat and ran out of the classroom. She locked herself in the bathroom and burst into tears.

After the embarrassing incident, Lilly stopped walking around in a flaunting manner and became completely introvert. She hardly spoke to any of the girls and would stay in the classroom during recess reading a book that she had borrowed from the library.

In fact the incident with Lolek had never really taken place. It was all a figment of her imagination to look "cool" and "hip" in the eyes of her friends. However, once she was perceived as lewd, she could not erase

the incident.

For the Easter holiday, the entire family was coming to Warsaw for a family reunion. Moses had invited everybody to his villa in Michalin. Adam was coming from medical school as was David, who had just completed his second year of university.

Woes of the Rich

Wolf was keenly aware of the financial situation of Count Sosnowski. The economic situation in Poland, together with his daughter's illness, had depleted his reserves.

The maintenance of the mansion had long been neglected and many of the palace servants and employees had been dismissed. In many places the plaster on the walls was peeling, the roof leaked in various spots, the rose garden and lawns had grown wild, the fish pond was filled with aquatic plants and other vegetation, and the swans had expired in last winter's frost.

Inside the palace, the state rooms were still maintained properly. The furniture and the paintings on the wall were in quite good condition.

Certain traditions were still strictly observed. Teatime at five in the afternoon was not abolished and was carried out faithfully. Countess

Janina would brew the finest Russian tea with a mixture of berries and a tablespoon of sugar, and would slowly pour it from the samovar into clear crystal glasses. On the table she placed a round silver bowl covered with red velvet cloth filled with her homemade pastries.

Family members would gather, meeting near the cozy fireplace in the winter and on the terrace facing the garden and lawn in the summer. It was a social gathering attended by only family members who lived on the estate. Non-family members were never permitted at these meetings.

The meeting this afternoon was very different. To this meeting Wolf, the adviser and loyal confidant of Count Jan Sosnowski, was invited.

Wolf, who arrived fifteen minutes before the meeting, entered the gate of the estate and parked his car in front of the building. The count came out to meet him and greeted him warmly as they shook hands. On the way to the conference room he whispered into his ear and said, "Don't divulge the true picture of the situation. I do not want to upset the countess more than is necessary."

This was Wolf's first visit to the count's home since his daughter had died. Although several months had already elapsed since her death, it was obvious that the household was still in mourning. The curtains were drawn and one could barely see into the rooms. The fireplace located in the enormous living room, spreading cozy warmth throughout the house, was the main source of light.

As the other members of the household began to arrive Wolf rose to greet them. When Count Ostrowski, Jan's brother-in-law, who also lived on the estate, arrived, Wolf bowed to him and kissed the hand of his wife. When everybody was seated Countess Janina served tea to all those

present.

While everybody was sipping steaming hot tea, Count Jan opened the meeting.

"You all know my loyal adviser, Attorney Wolf Nachimzon, who was kind enough to come here today and advise us about the current situation and present us with various options. Let us welcome him and afford him our undivided attention."

Wolf was a bit nervous. Signs of paralysis were still noticeable in his right hand, although it was functioning. He put his tea glass down on the table, removed a thick ring binder from his briefcase and placed it on the table in front of him. Holding a wooden ruler and a pencil in one hand he thumbed through some pages with the other and was ready to begin.

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Let me begin with the most difficult subject, which is the current financial situation, then afterwards I will discuss all options open to us. At present, we are experiencing a huge deficit. The situation is very bleak and getting worse from month to month. The purpose of this meeting is to try to find ways of stopping the financial hemorrhaging."

"What is the cause of the deficit?" Count Ostowski asked.

"The largest expenditures came from the treatment of the count's daughter Bozena. Maintenance of the palace, servants, personal expenses of the occupants of the palace and taxes have all increased in the last years, while the income of the palace has dropped significantly over the last two years," replied Wolf.

"How do you propose to stabilize the situation?" Count Ostrowski asked.

Wolf looked at the blank facial expression of Count Sosnowski and replied. "I suggest taking a ten-year loan. During that time you will be able to reduce your personal expenses as well as the expenses of the palace, and slowly eliminate the debt as revenues will hopefully begin to increase. It is advisable to put aside a fixed amount every month to be used to repay the loan."

Now it was Count Ostrowski's turn to respond.

"I recommend that we sell some assets and not burden ourselves with too many loans. The Jews make loans but the interest they charge can be a real burden. There are those among them who know that borrowers do not have the ability to repay the loan and are just waiting to foreclose, and as a result the property is transferred to the Jewish thieves. Forgive me Mr. Wolf, but that is the way I feel."

Wolf was taken aback by Count Ostrowski's comments and his face turned pale. He quickly recovered and addressed the count and said, "Excuse me, honorable Count, but do you know of any Polish institutions or individuals that would be willing to lend money in today's economic situation?"

The count turned red with anger but did not respond. Instead he just looked down and said nothing.

Count Sosnowski, seeing the exchange between Wolf and Count Ostrowski, decided it was time to intervene before all was lost.

"Mr. Wolf," he began. "It is not from yesterday that we know each other. Not only are you my trusted advisor, but I consider you one of my closest friends. Do not take the words of Count Ostrowski to heart. He is not used to dealing with money and therefore he is not aware of the situation

we are in or how to handle it. I am sure that you will easily find us a fair and suitable loan."

Wolf heard the words of flattery from the count and knew his true intentions, but did not hold a grudge against him. To the contrary, he even liked him.

For a moment, Wolf considered telling all those in attendance to go to hell and just leave, but he thought better of it and decided to respond to Count Sosnowski's remark and ignore the rest of the group.

"Honorable Count," he began. "I appreciate your comments and I am glad that you consider me as one of your trusted friends. That being the case, I will obtain a loan for you with easy repayment terms. I will go to Warsaw tomorrow and return with a loan agreement for you to sign."

Wolf got up from the comfortable chair he was sitting in and bowed to the all those assembled.

"I'll see myself out," he said and walked out; no-one else got up.

Wolf decided to help Count Sosnowski, despite feeling hurt by the anti-Semitic remarks of Count Ostrowski. He still saw Jan Sosnowski as a true friend. He remembered the gold chain that he sent when Lilly was born, the games of bridge they played every week, the walks along the River Pilica and the heart-to-heart conversations they had with each other. He knew how emotionally hurt the count was over the death of his daughter and the support he needed.

A few days after returning from Kielce, where he had gone to check on a number of businesses and look at their balance sheets, he went to the bank of his friend, Janusz Fichtman, which was close to the pharmacy

owned by Bitoft, father of Lolek.

"Attorney Wolf, what brings you to us?" Janusz asked.

"Pan Fichtman, if I said that I have come to have tea with you would you believe me?" Wolf replied.

"No. You surely came to ask for a loan" Janusz responded.

"So you know the reason for my visit," Wolf replied with a smile.

"I am also sure that it is not for you," Fichtman commented.

"Once again, you are right," Wolf responded.

"So, let me hear what it is all about," Fichtman said.

"Before I continue, I must insist that this conversation remains strictly confidential. You may not divulge the purpose of my visit to anybody," Wolf said earnestly.

"As a banker, it is imperative that I remain discreet," Fichtman answered.

"Well, that being said, I need a loan for Count Sosnowski of one hundred thousand zlotys," Wolf said.

"Boze Moje, My God," the banker said as he clapped his hands. "What will happen if the nobility in Poland is wiped out as happened in Russia, who will be responsible for the return of the money?" the banker asked." Are you willing to guarantee the loan?"

"I am not a guarantor for anybody nor do I earn anything from the deal. I am just trying to help the family of the count, who find themselves in financial trouble. It also affords you the opportunity to make some money. I did not turn to a Polish Catholic bank, but rather came straight

to you," Wolf replied.

"Very nice, but I still need further reassurance. Either you or somebody else guarantees the loan or there is a pledge of assets," said the banker.

"Without taking a risk there is no chance to make a profit," Wolf said.

"Sorry, but the only one who can guarantee the loan is the count himself."

"If so, look for somebody else. I am not prepared to take the risk," the banker responded.

Wolf left the bank very disappointed, even though in his heart he knew that the banker was right. If he were a banker, he would never lend money to a nobleman who was in financial difficulty and whose status was unstable, especially without a guarantor.

Before returning to the count's palace to tell him the not-such-good news, Wolf made one more attempt. He decided to travel to Warsaw to meet his brother-in-law, Moses Wolowelski.

He found Moses in a very depressed mood. It has been several months since he last heard anything from Adam in Italy. Jerzy was no longer attending school, because he was ill with whooping cough and was presently in Switzerland for treatment. His mother had gone there to be with him.

Wolf told Moses the reason for the unannounced visit and that he was looking for a loan for the count.

"Wolf," Moses began. "I appreciate your request. But please be honest with me. If I were to give him the loan, what are the chances that I will get my money back? The way I understand the situation, he does not have the wherewithal ever to pay it back. What will I do? Sue him? Send

debt collectors after him?"

Wolf did not answer; he just sat there and looked down. He knew that the count would not be able to repay the loan and then Moses would blame him for getting him into this mess.

"Look Wolf, I understand your desire to help the count obtain a loan. I have an idea. Go and tell him that you secured a loan for him, but the lender wants some kind of security. His signature on a promissory note will not suffice. The security he is looking for is in the form of jewelry, works of art and other valuables. If he refuses, that is his problem. You have done your part and procured the loan in cash that he was seeking."

"Moses, you are a true businessman," Wolf proclaimed. "I knew that you would help me find a solution. You are right, it is not necessary to take risks."

While two of them were sitting and talking, David came into the house. When he saw his father, he ran over and hugged him tightly. He wanted to shake Moses' hand, but Moses drew him closer and gave him a hug too.

"You are like a son to me," Moses said. He then turned to Wolf and said, "Do you know that David comes to visit me nearly every day. What would I do without him?"

David had brought with him a letter that he had received from Adam, but he asked Moses not to read it. "It is very personal," David said.

Moses pressured him to read it and in the end David relented and began to read it aloud.

Dear David,

It's been a while since I last heard anything from home. In truth, time passes by so quickly, that between studies and entertainment there is not time to think. Gorgeous Rosie drives me mad and I am desperately in love with her. You should only see those long and enthusiastic kisses she gives me. I stand no chance of going beyond that point with her. She made it perfectly clear to me that she is safeguarding her virginity for the one who will marry her. I happen to agree with her and would do the same. Her parents love me and I spend lots of time at their home. I miss the family atmosphere so I really enjoy going to them. Especially as her mother makes delicious gnocchi with meat sauce and tomatoes. I have become addicted to it. As you can see, I am not lacking food and love. I will soon be finishing my second year of school and will be coming home for the long summer vacation. Miss you all very much.

Modena 07.02.1931

Adam

Moses smiled and thanked David for agreeing to read the letter to him.

"Adam is similar to me in many ways. He is red-headed as I am, likes women and entertainment like I do, makes quick decision, is boastful and arrogant just like me.

"He inherited all my bad traits," he said laughingly. "He will manage well in life, as he knows exactly what he wants," Moses continued.

"Please let me know what the count decided, so that I can prepare the money for the loan." He then told Wolf that he should sleep over at his

house, as he had plenty of room.

Tormented Soul

"What's for dinner tonight? I invited Lolek to eat with us tonight," Lilly announced as she came in from school.

"Does he not have a home to go to?" Ida protested. "Why do you invite him without first asking me? As it is, he hangs around this house nearly every day."

Grandma Pauline, who was in the kitchen preparing meat filled *pierogi*, entered the room and interjected, "Lillka, you are a beautiful and smart girl, why are you getting involved with that young man?"

Lilly tried to answer both of them but her voice was choked with tears. She ran to her room and dug her head in the pillow crying bitterly. Izio, who was ill and lying in the next bed dozing beside her, woke up in panic and asked, "Lillka, what happened?"

Lilly did not answer him and continued to cry. Ida finally entered the room and sat down next to Lilly, embraced her and whispered into her ear, "Are you really that much in love with him?"

Lilly sat up and hugged her mother, "I do not know, but I am happy with

him and he makes me laugh with his nonsensical actions."

"Fine, you can invite him, providing it does not become a habit," Ida said.

"Okay mother. You are such a good and understanding mother," Lilly said as she kissed her mother.

Towards evening, while everyone was sitting around the table, Lolek appeared dressed in festive clothing, holding a small bouquet of purple flowers.

"Lolek, you never cease to amaze me. Purple flowers because my name is Lilly?"

Lolek blushed and looked away from Lilly and asked, "Where shall I put the flowers, Mrs. Ida? Do you have a vase?"

Wolf sat at the head of the table next to his mother, Paulina, Lilly sat next to her grandmother and Lolek sat next to her. Ida was serving and busy in the kitchen. Izio, wearing a knitted cap on his head and a blanket over his shoulders, sat opposite Lolek and quietly mumbled to himself, "This is going to be very interesting."

"What are you talking about over there?" Paulina said to Izio. "Eat and shut up or go back to bed immediately."

Ida brought to the table smoked bacon with baked potatoes that were simmering for hours in a pot that was placed near the fireplace along with pickled cabbage and *pierogi* fried in goose fat.

"I thought I was coming to a Jewish meal. This is the same food we eat in our house," Lolek commented.

"What did you think you would get by us, fried toads? What is Jewish

food?" Wolf responded in a complaining tone.

"I have heard that there is kosher Jewish food. I do not know exactly what it is, but I heard that it is tasty," Lolek said defensively."I was not trying to be a wise guy."

"Enough talking, start eating," an angry Ida said as she sat down to eat.

"Lolek, you are the same age as Davidek and have surely graduated from high school. What are you doing now?" Wolf asked.

"I am trying to get accepted to pharmacology school and have submitted applications to the University of Krakow, Lodz and Warsaw. All three have rejected me due to my poor grades. I have therefore decided to work on improving my grades and then try again."

Lolek was the son of the pharmacist Bronislaw Bitoft, who owned a pharmacy in the center of the Rynek. When Lolek was about six years old his mother disappeared. It seems that she had met an Austrian officer who was stationed in Włoszczowa and joined him when he left the army. From then on, nobody had heard from her again. Bronislaw began courting one of the employees at his pharmacy who was ten years younger than he was. She finally moved in with him and bore him two daughters. He never officially married her, nor did he divorce his first wife.

Lolek could not find his place in the house and did not enjoy a good relationship with the new "mother" nor with his father, who always criticized him, saying that he was a treacherous and disloyal person just like his mother.

Lolek was a very poor student and did not do well in school and it was

not because he was lazy or slow to comprehend. He was smart and sharp-tongued, but due to his long absences from school, he did not succeed in his studies.

Every morning he would take his bicycle to go to school. However, more often than not, he never arrived at school. He would veer off the main road and travel on a side dirt road through the forest that leads to the River Pilica. He rode among the tall trees whose tops touched each other and created near complete darkness. He knew the forest paths all too well and knew to beware of snakes or wild boar.

He would arrive at a small clearing where he left his bike and climbed a tree where he had built for himself a small tree house in the branches. He would lie down, look at the sky, listen to the sounds of the birds and eventually close his eyes and begin to daydream. Those were the finest hours during which he imagined that he was in a far away land, flying like a bird over land and rivers, volcanoes and ancient cities, all the while looking at the people from above and discovering other cultures.

When Lolek returned home from the forest, he would go straight to his room and scatter his textbooks on his bed to make it look as if he was going to study what he had learned that day. He then ate lunch with his stepmother and two sisters, barely uttering a word to them. After lunch, he would leave the house and go to Lilly's house to spend the rest of the day there. Ida knew when Lolek arrived, but never asked him any questions because she felt sorry for him. She knew how lonely he felt at home ever since his mother disappeared, never to be seen again.

Lolek became like one of the family in the house of Ida and Wolf. In the early years he came to their home seeking some warmth and familial love, however as Lilly grew older and matured he came mainly for her.

Lolek had several friends from the neighborhood, but they were not true friends. Most of the time, they exploited him and used him for their own convenience. They would ask him to steal cigarettes from his father who was a heavy smoker. On other occasions they would ask him to steal drugs from his father's pharmacy for their personal use.

They would taunt and tease him by calling him *zydek*, Jew, but that did not deter him from visiting Lilly and also not responding to their words.

One day Lolek offered to show Lilly where he spent most of his day. She agreed. The next morning they rode together on Lolek's bike to his hiding place on the forest. Since Lilly sat on the frame of the bike in front of him, her hair blew into his face. The delicious smell of her hair drove him mad. He touched her arms as she held on tightly to the handlebars.

He was madly in love with her but he kept his feelings to himself deep inside his heart. He was afraid and insecure that the moment he revealed his love for her, she would reject him and he would lose her completely. He was afraid of losing her and the warmth and security that he got at her home.

Lilly followed him into the forest until they reached the clearing where his tree house was. She refused to climb the tree, so she sat down on the trunk of an old tree that had fallen down.

"Is this where you go when you want to be alone?" Lilly asked.

"Yes," he answered. Here I find peace of mind that allows me to think."

"What do you think about," she giggled.

"About everything that I have been experiencing lately," he replied in all seriousness.

"Am I in your thoughts too?" she teased him.

"Sure," he answered curtly.

"And what do you think about me or about us?" she queried him.

Lolek did not answer her. He climbed the tree and lay down in the tree house.

Lilly raised her voice and shouted, "I am waiting for an answer."

"Stop. You're embarrassing me. Would you please change the subject," Lolek shouted down from the tree.

"Would you please come down," Lilly shouted. "I am afraid of being alone down here."

Lolek came down from the tree and they walked home together as he wheeled the bike beside him.

Journey on the Orient Express

One day the following letter was received by Ida from her aunt Berta who lived in Istanbul.

Dear Ida,

Ever since I left St. Petersburg and then Odessa (after my divorce from Mordechai Spector) I have lived here in Istanbul all alone. I am not bored, but I do miss the family. I would love to see you all, but I am not so young anymore to make the long journey. I spend my time writing my memoirs.

The people here are very pleasant and friendly and I enjoy very good relations with the Baha'i community.

Why do you not come and see me? I would love to see you and maybe even your children. Perhaps you can convince your sister Berta Mirarbel to come along with you? I remember her when we were young growing up together. Have you ever gone to visit the grave of my brother Isaac? Are you in touch with Lazer and Iliya? I have not heard anything from them in ages.

I am looking forward to a positive reply.

Your Berta

Istanbul, 2 February 1932

The letter came from Berta Friedberg, the only daughter of the famous writer Abraham Shalom Friedberg. She was born in Grodno, then in part of Poland, and was the sister to four brothers, Elia, Lazer, Boris and Isaac. Berta, known by her pen name Isabella Arkadina Grinevskaya was a poet, playwright, writer and

translator.

Ida, not expecting a letter from Aunt Berta, was in shock when she read it. When she finished reading the letter, she decided that it would be nice to go to Istanbul to visit her. The Middle East had always intrigued her and this was a unique opportunity to learn more about other cultures.

Ida called her sister Berta and told her about the letter and about Aunt Berta's request that they go to visit her. She was beside herself with joy and immediately agreed to go. They set a travel date and decided to travel in style and take the Orient Express that goes from Paris, via Vienna, Budapest and Bucharest, to Istanbul.

Ida decided to take along Lilly, then seventeen years old. David, who lived in Warsaw, was too busy with his studies at the university to come, and Izio was too young for such a long trip so he stayed at home with his father and grandmother.

The day before the intended trip, Aunt Berta came from Lodz. She was dressed real fancy, with a colorful giant hat on her head, a parasol in one hand and a heavy suitcase in the other. That night she slept in her sister Roza's house. The next morning she got up very early to make sure that she did not miss her ride to the train station. Stanislaw was going to drive everybody to the train station in Kielce, since that was the closest one to Włoszczowa.

The first stop was at Wolf's house. Ida came out, with Wolf and Lilly following her. The farewell was quick and unemotional. Lilly

then hugged her father and younger brother and got into the car. Just before Ida got into the car, she paused for a moment as if she had forgotten something. It actually was a moment of fear. She was afraid to leave Wolf alone, so she had asked her neighbor Zosia to look in on him from time to time and check that everything was fine. Ida and Zosia were very close friends and helped each other whenever possible. They did not hesitate to send their children to each other's house to be watched if they had to run out for a quick errand. Zosia's daughter Eva loved to come over to play with Lilly's dachshund puppy.

When Stanislaw arrived at Roza's house to fetch Berta, she was already waiting outside with her suitcase.

The car ride to Kielce went smoothly. When they arrived, they realized that they had a two-hour wait until their train to Vienna left.

When it was finally time to board, they said farewell to Stanislaw and boarded the train.

By the time they arrived at the main railway station in Vienna it was already early evening. The Orient Express was scheduled to depart for Istanbul at midnight; consequently they had a five-hour wait.

They put their bags in storage at the train station and went out to do a bit of sightseeing, as the weather was very pleasant and was announcing the approaching spring. The cafes were crowded and

the atmosphere was very jovial. People who had been trapped in their homes all during the harsh winter, now began taking to the streets and filling the concert halls, museums and cafés.

They hired a carriage, drawn by two white horses, to take them around the beautiful town to see the sights. At one of the stops they got out and went into a café to taste the famous Viennese sacher cake and strudel of which Ida was so enamored.

"Mom, your strudel is much tastier," Lilly said after she tasted it. Berta nodded her head in agreement.

"Stop trying to flatter me, I know it's not true. My strudel is good, but it will take a long time, if at all, until I know how to bake a strudel like this one," Ida replied.

It was nearly midnight when they returned to the train station. They hired a porter to take their luggage to the train. At exactly midnight the Orient Express pulled into the station. The porter helped them to carry their suitcases into the sleeper compartment that they had reserved. Lilly relaxed in her easy chair, as her bones were aching from sitting on the wooden seat on the train to Vienna. She opened out her chair to a bed and cuddled up for a good night's sleep.

"When I wake up, we will probably be in Budapest, if not in Bucharest," she said.

"I do not think we will be in Bucharest yet by the time you wake

up. It is a long journey; the distance between Vienna and Bucharest is about a thousand kilometers. It will take us at least a day to get there, especially with stops of at least one to two hours in every city," Ida replied."Now go to sleep and we will wake up when we wake up. We are in no rush to get anywhere."

Turkey

When Lilly woke up, she found that her mother and aunt were already awake and reading books.

"What is the book you're reading about?" Lilly asked Berta.

"It is a book that I found in the library in Warsaw. It takes place during the fifteenth century and is about a young Russian girl named Rukslan Aleksandra, who was brought to Constantinople and placed in the harem at the Topkapi Palace. It tells of the great love that developed between her and Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent," Berta replied.

"It sounds like an interesting story. When you have finished it, I would like to read it," Lilly said.

"Are you implying that I should hurry up?" Bertha asked.

"No," Lilly replied. "You can continue at your own pace. I find it

difficult to read on trains with all the vibration and shaking. I feel sick and cannot concentrate on reading."

"Stop chattering," Ida interrupted. "What would the two of you like to eat? I was just at the restaurant and had some tea and toast."

"If so, I will go too. But first I must go to the bathroom and freshen up a bit" Berta said.

The speeding train passed through villages and vast green plains. As they approached Bucharest, they saw the village farmers plowing their fields with primitive wooden plows drawn by oxen. There were no vehicles in sight and poverty was evident everywhere. All they saw were animals pulling cartloads of straw.

"It is so much fun to be a tourist and to travel in luxury. The only person I know who can afford to travel in this style is Aunt Cesia," Lilly commented. Her mother and aunt did not answer her, either because they did not hear her, or because the comment did not warrant a response.

The train finally arrived at Bucharest and stopped at a platform crowded with people. Interestingly, nobody got off the train nor did anybody board the train. Many had come either out of curiosity just to see the luxurious train, or perhaps to glimpse the aristocrats who were known to travel in the front super-luxurious carriages. When the horn of the locomotive sounded, people began waving their hands as if saying goodbye. Lilly waved back to them until the train pulled out of the station and the human landscape changed to

one of endless corn fields.

By estimating the number of kilometers and hours already travelled, Ida calculated that the train was due in at the last stop towards evening.

Ida was right. As they approached Bosphorus Bay they could see the city lights and they knew that they had arrived.

When the train finally pulled into the station it was already midnight. They hired a porter to help them offload their suitcases and put them on handcarts that were scattered throughout the station.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, Isabella appeared, running towards them. Ida recognized her from the many photographs she had sent. They ran into each other's arms and hugged each other warmly. Isabella then walked over to Berta and Lilly and hugged them too.

Although Isabella's apartment was small, there was space for everybody. Ida slept together with Isabella in the double bed, Lilly slept on the sofa in the living room, while Berta slept in the hallway on a folding bed.

Due to the late hour, apart from a brief conversation and a glass of sweet black tea, the guests, one after the other, got into bed totally exhausted and fell asleep.

In the morning, they could hear the cry of the muezzin from the

minarets of the mosque: *Allah Akbar*, God is the greatest.

They all ran to the balcony of the apartment to see what the noise was.

Isabella laughed and said, "That is the call for morning prayers. Nothing to be alarmed about."

The view from the balcony was almost magical; the bay and the bridge that connect the two parts of the city, the churches and mosques along with fishermen in their decorated boats. Everything looked so special. The view was totally different from what they were used to seeing in Poland.

Isabella, who was nearing seventy years of age, walked with difficulty, and it was evident that she suffered from pain in her knees. Her mind however, was young, sharp and full of life.

"What is the attitude of the residents towards the Jews?" Berta asked.

"When Kemal Atatürk was elected leader of Turkey, he introduced a series of political, legal, cultural, social and economic policy changes that were designed to convert the new Turkey into a secular, modern nation. One of the clauses in the new constitution stated that all religions are equal under the law. In every speech, he mentioned that they must protect the Jews and accept them as brothers. As early as 1836, the Ottoman Empire had announced in one of its *hatti humanyun* (imperial decrees),

that all citizens are equal before the law including the Jews. Hundreds of Jews from Germany and other European countries arrived to enjoy the freedom of religion and expression in Turkey. I am so glad that I moved from Odessa to Constantinople, which incidentally was renamed as Istanbul," Isabella explained.

"I am surprised by what you say, as we have never heard about it at all. After all, they are all Muslims here" Berta said.

"Yes, they are indeed Muslims, but the new leader aims to get closer to Europe. He has introduced swift changes to the ways of life. He has outlawed the face veil as well as polygamy, and even replaced the Arabic script with the Latin alphabet. It is interesting to note that there has hardly been any opposition. The Turkish people view these changes as progress and have a desire to connect to the West," Isabella expounded.

"What about your relations with the Bahai?" Berta questioned.

"I wrote a play on the subject of the Bahai which became a big hit and was shown in many countries. A number of years ago I was invited to go to Egypt and even met with the Bahai community leader," Isabella answered with a smile.

"You were in Egypt?" Lilly interrupted. "Have you seen the pyramids?"

"Yes, I saw them and they are of enormous proportions. I did not go in any of them. I settled on a visit to the museum in downtown Cairo, where I saw the findings from the excavations near the

pyramids," Isabella answered.

"Who are the Bahai that you wrote about"? Lilly inquired curiously.

"The Bahai are a sect that originated in India. They are pacifists, lovers of nature and beauty, and believe in the absolute equality between the sexes. One can say that their religion is very similar to the Hindu religion," Isabella answered patiently.

This time it was Isabella who turned to Lilly with a question.

"Lillinka, tell me a little about yourself. What do you do? Or better yet, what are you planning to do with your life."

Lilly blushed when she heard the question. She really did not like it when people delved into her private life, especially not in front of her mother and her aunt Berta.

After a moment she regained her composure and replied.

"Aunt Isabella, I admire you for being a liberated woman with a mind of your own, powerful and influential. I wish I could live here with you and study your writings and enrich my life with the stories of your experiences. My life is not very interesting and I do not know yet in which direction to turn. I love the theater but to be a professional actress is the furthest thing from my mind."

"My sweet Lilly," Isabella began. "You can stay and live with me. I would gladly adopt you as the daughter I never had. I just don't think that Ida will relinquish you so fast nor will Izio and David. On

the other hand, if I may add, one should never despair right away, as everything can be done if you really want it and devote yourself entirely to the matter."

"What is here is to see in Istanbul?" Lilly asked.

"This beautiful city on the Bosphorus was once called Byzantium. Later it became Constantinople, named after the Roman emperor Constantine who conquered it from the Ottoman Sultan Muhammad II, but it was also always known by its Ottoman name of Istanbul. We can visit the Topkapi Palace and go to see the beautiful picturesque markets that bestow upon the city its charm and magic and which stir up the imagination of the Europeans. We will then visit the Blue Mosque and the Basilica of St. Sophia and possibly the Galata Tower and the Neve Shalom Synagogue," Isabella said.

"You can go alone to the synagogue. I am really not interested in seeing the synagogue," Lilly protested.

Bitter Disappointment

Wolf, who was less busy ever since he has not returned to his government job, worked as a self employed independent contractor for different companies all over the region. He became known as an expert in tax and investment matters. As his client base expanded, so too did his work load. He became very selective about whom he would take on as a client and limited the number of clients. He refused to become a slave to his work and due to health reasons he did not want to take on too many tasks. Since his illness, he changed the schedule and routine of his life. He began walking every morning for an hour, from seven to eight. He ate more vegetables and less meat, slept for an hour every afternoon and refrained from smoking and drinking alcohol.

"What is life without all these vices?" he would ask his doctor.

He always got the same answer. "You received your first warning for your bad behavior. If you do not continue on the proper path, you will receive your final blow. You decide."

Wolf did not want to worry Ida and the children, so sleep a lot, ate healthy foods and did not smoke or drink. He became a "holy man." One morning, three days after Ida and Lilly left, he decided to visit Count Sosnowski. He drove to the city of Maluszyn and did not stop to see his friend the artist, rather went straight to the count's estate. The count opened the door, shook his hand warmly and escorted him into the living room.

"Please be seated," the count said as he showed him to the couch.

Wolf refused the cup of tea that was served as well as the drink of vodka. The count noticed that Wolf was very tense.

In a serious tone, he addressed Wolf.

"My dear Wolf, I see that you are very agitated and tense and do not know how to begin to ask what it is you have to tell me. I will therefore make things easier for you and I will say it. I know that that you were not successful in obtaining the one hundred thousand zlotys loan that I had requested, especially not in this terrible economic environment. Do not feel bad. I am glad that you at least came to see me."

He then added, "When do you think we will be able to renew our weekly bridge game which I enjoy so much?"

Wolf was in shock at the words of the count, but quickly recovered and answered in a voice slightly louder voice.

"My good friend Count Jan. I must tell you that I have been successful in acquiring a loan for you, however, there are conditions that go along with it."

When the count heard Wolf's words, his eyes reddened, his face twisted and turned pale from the joy and excitement that seized him.

"Tell me, just tell me," the count shouted. "I will agree to

everything."

"The condition for the loan is that you will have to give guarantees in the form of oil paintings or jewelry up to the amount of the loan. Please note that the loan can be reduced by any amount that is repaid and the items given as the guarantee will be returned in that amount," Wolf explained.

Count Sosnowski was not taken aback nor offended by the offer. He has already been selling off some assets in order to survive.

"I agree," the count began. "There is one condition that I must insist upon, and that is that no member of my family may know about it. I have various items that I would prefer to give as collateral such as family heirlooms that have great sentimental value to me. Although they may not have much value to others, nevertheless, it would give me the impetus to repay the loan quickly as I would want them back."

"What sort of things are you talking about?" Wolf inquired.

"A pocket watch that belonged to my grandfather, two antique books with an elegant silver cover and an oil painting, a portrait of my grandfather. If that is not enough I can probably add a few more items," the count answered.

Here is where Wolf interrupted the count and said, "The lender wants something more tangible; something that has market value, not sentimental items that are only of value to you."

"Speak clearly. What, for example is he looking for?" the count asked losing his cool.

"Valuable jewelry," was the answer.

"In that case I would have to give him my wife as a guarantee. It is inconceivable that I would give her jewelry as collateral without her knowledge," he answered in anger.

"I am really sorry, but I am not authorized to take as collateral anything other than valuable jewelry such as diamonds, gold or pearls," Wolf replied with some embarrassment.

"I thought you were my friend, and you would make every effort on my behalf," the count said. "I see you that are all the same; greedy and money hungry."

Wolf got up and said, "I am really disappointed to hear such expressions coming from you. After all, you know that I do not gain even a single penny from this whole deal."

"I am not so sure about that. Besides, your stubbornness will force me to humiliate myself in front of my wife," the count responded.

"And I am not so sure that you would have been able to pay back the loan. I am therefore quite pleased that you rejected the offer I brought to you," Wolf answered while turning toward the exit without even bidding the count good bye.

The count did not try to stop him, and Wolf angrily left the mansion. "How could the count have spoken to me with such callousness when I did everything in my power to help him?" Wolf thought to himself.

Two days after the angry encounter with the count, his driver arrived at Wolf's house with a letter of apology.

Dear Wolf,

I am terribly sorry about what I said to you. It was actually a slip of the tongue. You more than anybody else knows that I am not a racist. It is due to the intolerable situation that I find myself in that I uttered those nonsensical words.

I ask you to please accept my sincerest apology so that we can work our differences out.

I spoke to my wife and we are willing to give our jewelry as collateral for the entire amount of the loan.

Please, I beg of you to draw up an agreement and arrange for a time to meet with the banker.

Jan Sosnowski

Wolf did not immediately answer the count. Instead he decided to travel to Warsaw and meet with Moses. He took along Izio who was with him at home.

He drove his car to Kielce, left it at the train station and took the train to Warsaw.

Before departing for Warsaw, Wolf called Moses to let him know that he was coming that evening.

When he arrived in Warsaw, he took a taxi to David's apartment. Izio, who had not seen his brother for a long time burst into tears and ran to hug him.

"Can I leave Izio with you until tomorrow" Wolf asked David.
"I will sleep over at Moses' house."

"As long as you pick him up early. I have a test tomorrow at the university and must be there early in the morning," David answered.

When he arrived at Moses' house on Ogrodowa Street, it was already getting dark. He walked up the steps slowly. He was never able to walk up the steps fast because of his weight, but now after his illness it was even more difficult, as the slightest exertion tired him out. He was still in great need of his afternoon rest.

Moses was waiting for him with a meal that he had prepared. He did not like it when the cook and cleaning staff wandered around while he was alone at home, so he sent them home until Cesia returned from her visit to her cousin Stefania. She was due back the next day.

"I imagine that you came in order to finalize the loan for the count," Moses said, as they were finishing the thick, bland and tasteless *krupnik* soup that Moses had prepared.

"I did indeed come to talk about the loan, but I am not happy about it. You are much too dear to me to see you lose money on a vile person like him. I am not sure if I really want to help him," Wolf articulated.

When Wolf saw the expression on Moses' face, he told him about the shameful incident that took place.

"But did he not apologize?" Moses said in defense of the count.

"The truth was exposed," Wolf began to explain. "Those harsh words came straight from his heart. It is clear that after he realized what he had said, he regretted it and sent a letter of apology. He probably reminded himself that apart from me, there is nobody who would even try to help him obtain a loan."

"You are right. However, anti-Semitism is rampant all over. You can hear anti-Semitic remarks in the press, universities and in politics. Recently there has been a re-birth of the right wing party, The National Democratic Party. That is the party that came into being on the eve of WWI, with the slogan of "Poland for Poles". It advocated an extremely anti-Semitic policy, which was based on the assumption that Jews not be

integrated into Poland, since their culture is different and that they should emigrate from Poland. We are blamed for everything that goes wrong including the bad economic conditions in the country. Don't you know, we are the embodiment of evil," Moses heatedly said.

"My dear Moses," Wolf began. "I am Polish and am no different from any other Pole, Catholic or Gypsy. We may be of a different race, but we are all patriotic and love our country and its culture. Here is where our grandparents were born, our parents were born and here is where our children were born. We must combat this ugly phenomenon until it vanishes. Whoever wants to go to Palestine or America let them go. There are many Polish Catholics who emigrated to America or England or even go to Australia, so what?"

Moses moved uncomfortably in his armchair. He got up and poured for himself a glass of vodka.

"I am not offering you a drink, as I know that since your illness you have stopped drinking," Moses said apologetically.

"I do not drink when my wife is around. Please be so kind and pour me a drink," Wolf said with a smile.

"The situation in Poland is deteriorating. It seems to me that ever since General Pilsudsky has died, things have gotten worse, as the government has been deliberately imposing severe restrictions on the Jews. I find it difficult to collect rent

from the tenants; half of them do not pay at all and the other half pay late and only after many threats. They are all either elderly or have children and they have no food. I can't throw them into the street." Moses complained.

"Perhaps we should forget about the loan." Wolf suggested.

"No," Moses replied. "I think we should give him the loan. This way he will be indebted to us and in difficult times he may be able to help us. Besides I will be holding jewelry in the amount of the loan."

"Remember one thing," Wolf said. "If something happens, do not blame me."

"I am not a child and I know exactly what I am doing," Moses replied patting Wolf on his shoulder.

Before retiring for the night, Moses asked what Wolf heard from "the women in Turkey".

"Everything is fine, I received a greeting postcard" he answered.

The Gift

For Lilly her first morning in Istanbul seemed right out of the fairy tales that her mother used to read to her.

Ida and Bertha were still tired from the trip and opted to stay at home for the rest of the day. Lilly pestered Isabella to take her to see the sights of the city. The horse-drawn carriage took them to the vicinity of the Grand Bazaar. As they walked among the stalls, Lilly could not contain her excitement and tears of joy ran down her cheeks.

"Auntie, this is just like in the story books," Lilly commented with great enthusiasm.

When they passed the stall selling spices, Lilly stopped and examined the spices, smelled them and savored the different smells. When they walked past the food stalls, she helped herself to some Turkish candy coated with crushed almonds. Isabella had to pull her arm and urge her to move on without stopping at each stall and wasting time.

After drinking some sweet black tea with baklava dripping with honey, Isabella approached a stand selling silk scarves. She took one off the rack and after short haggling with the seller over the price, wrapped it around Lilly's neck. Lilly was very excited and hugged Isabella, kissed her on both cheeks and said, "Auntie, you're great. Thank you. I'm so glad that I came."

Isabella lifted the scarf a bit and covered a part of Lilly's hair."What a

beautiful Muslim girl you are. The bluish green eyes match the color of the ocean." She smiled and then added, "You are going to need it in order to enter the mosque."

As they continued walking, they passed the livestock market, where sheep, goats, camels, donkeys, pigeons and rabbits were sold. The vendors, who were mainly cattle traders from the surrounding villages, who came to Istanbul to sell their cattle, loudly recommending their goods.

"I'll give you ten camels and three sheep for that young girl," one of the farmers proposed to Isabella. She smiled and continued on. "Twenty camels," he shouted after her as she walked away.

"Auntie, what did he want?" Lilly asked.

Isabella pulled her by the hand and began walking a little faster.

"He wanted to buy you in exchange for twenty camels," Isabella answered.

"Is that all I am worth to him? Twenty camels? He must be kidding. Right, Auntie?" Lilly said.

"He was very serious. Don't worry. I would not sell you for even one thousand camels," Isabella replied.

A shocked Lilly continued walking, holding Isabella's hand tightly, while occasionally glancing behind her.

When they returned home, they saw that Ida and Berta had prepared lunch. The table was set and laden with Polish delicacies that Izsabella recognized from her youth, but had forgotten what they tasted like. As

she ate, she became more and more excited as waves of memories flooded her mind.

"Wow, do you realize how long it has been since I ate *kneidlach*, matza balls, in chicken soup? Where on earth did you get the ingredients from?" Isabella excitedly asked.

Ida giggled and said, "Did you not notice the loaded suitcase I came with. This morning I went to the butcher to buy a chicken to make soup. Since I did not know how to speak Turkish, I waved my hand and squawked like a chicken so that he would understand what I wanted. He broke out in laughter, and handed me a chicken."

"It's a good thing he did not think that you were crazy," Isabella replied amused..

"Tell me a bit about the going ons in the family and how everybody is getting along. From your letters it is difficult to glean the overall situation in Poland. Do they harass the Jews? How is the family in Warsaw? What about my brother Ilia and his daughters?" Isabella inquired.

Ida got up from the table and pulled the heavy drapes aside.

"It is very dark and stuffy in here," she said. "Why do you not let some fresh air in? You should allow sun light in too. It is also good for one's mood."

She then settled back on the couch in the living room and started to answer Isabella's queries.

"Although Ilia is already past seventy, he nonetheless works full time and is considered a good doctor, although his methods are a bit outdated. In two years David will finish his studies in dentistry at the University of

Warsaw and wants to do his apprenticeship at Dr. Buhaniek's dental clinic in Miedzyrzec Podlaski. He is a highly regarded specialist in the field of advanced dentistry. Your brother Lazer has been living for the past few years in Houston, Texas, and occasionally writes us a letter. In every letter he begs us to come to live in the United States and suggests that David go there to study. As things stand now, that is impossible, because the American government has put a stop to all immigration to the United States from Europe. In Poland the situation is still tolerable. The problem is only with a small percentage of Jews who are not willing to accept Poland as their homeland. Many want to emigrate to Palestine or set up an autonomous state within the territory of Poland. I am referring mainly to the orthodox Jews who refuse to send their children to Polish schools and hardly speak the language. Thereby creating complete segregation and hatred. The Poles consider them responsible for all the woes of Poland and it is from there that all the decrees and segregation against the Jews stem."

Isabella sighed and sadness could be seen in her eyes.

"This will not have a happy ending. I wish you would all come here to live. Present-day Turkey under Kemal Ataturk is not the same as the Turkey of the Ottoman pashas. Today's Turkey is moving towards the West. There are new laws, new customs and all religions are equal under the law. There is complete tolerance of customs and freedom of religions. I feel free and totally accepted," she declared.

Berta interrupted the conversation and said, "Do you think that at our age, we are going to take our children, sell our property and all our belongings and start wandering to new places? To where? Tomorrow this Kemal may be assassinated and a dictator will take over, change the

laws and slaughter all the Jews in the country."

"Indeed everything is possible," Isabella replied. "We are a nation without a homeland and nothing is inevitable. Perhaps the answer is Zionism; Herzl may be correct in his approach and I know that Lord Balfour announced that the British government has approved a Jewish state for the Jewish people. Perhaps we should consider Palestine as the solution to our problems."

She then added, "What does Wolf say about this? After all David Wolfson, uncle of his mother Paulina, was Herzl's deputy."

"I have absolutely no affinity to Zionism, although to my great amazement, Wolf took part in the mass rally in Włoszczowa, when the Balfour Declaration was publicized in his letter to Lord Rothschild," replied Ida.

"I am not going to Palestine," Lilly interrupted. "You have all lost your minds."

In the evening they all went out to the city center. The streets were crowded with people. On the main street brightly painted horse-drawn carriages, the horses decorated with peacock feathers on their heads, were riding up and down. The women wore robes and their heads were covered with semi-transparent silk handkerchiefs. Every so often women dressed in western clothes could be seen.

They passed a restaurant with tables were arranged on the terrace. They went in and sat down at a table in the center of the terrace. In the four corners, men in traditional dress and wearing red fezzes on their heads were standing. They were holding sticks with feathers at the ends, waving them over the heads of the diners, chasing away the pesky flies

that were very bothersome.

Isabella had hoped to surprise her guests with traditional Turkish cuisine, but when they tasted the *koftadoner*, or the pilaf, they wrinkled their noses and made distorted faces. Ida even spat it out into the napkin in her hand. Lilly was the only one who tasted and liked the unique cuisine; food that she did not recognize but which agreed with her palate.

Isabella laughed at the sight of two Poles holding napkins in their hands, ready at any moment to regurgitate the contents of their stomachs.

"Mother is very sensitive to any food that is not Polish," Lilly interjected. This time both Isabella and Lilly broke out in wild laughter.

When the waiter passed their table, Isabella called to him and said, "Two cups of tea for the ladies, please." When the waiter acknowledged the request by shaking his head, Isabella added, "The cup should be of thin glass with a handle," and once again she and Lilly broke out in infectious laughter.

Berta began feeling queasy in her stomach. She asked to be excused from the table and went to the bathroom. When she returned, her face was pale as a ghost.

"What happened to you?" Ida asked.

"The bathroom is a big hole in the ground with a terrible smell emanating from it. I feel sick and must return home immediately," Berta said.

The next morning the two sisters stayed in bed, sick. Isabella served them tea and dried bagels.

"I am going to take Lilly out on the town. It would be a shame if she did not see anything of Istanbul," Lilly suggested.

"Where are we going, Auntie?" Lilly asked.

"To the Blue Mosque," Isabella replied.

"We will come home later on in the afternoon," she told the sisters.

As they left the house, a carriage was coming down the street. Isabella raised her hand and the carriage stopped to pick them up.

"The Blue Mosque," she told the driver.

In the carriage they relaxed on the comfortable seats, one opposite the other. Although Isabella was nearly seventy years old, she showed much vigor and vitality. As a writer and researcher she had come into contact with different cultures and interesting people and thus had many stories to tell.

On a personal level she had been married but never had children. She had adjusted herself quite well to a single's life, for lack of any other choice.

Looking at Lilly with a sad face, she said, "Lilka, don't make the same mistake I made. Find a young man and get married and set up a family. At the same time do not lose your independence and achieve your aspirations."

"Auntie, I would love to be like you; independent, with my own opinions and not dependent on anybody," Lilly answered.

"You are mistaken. There is nothing good about my life. I am lonely and live prudently from the private lessons that I give, translations that I do,

articles that I write for foreign newspapers and from money that I have saved up. It is not much but it gives me a bit of financial security."

Lily looked at her with sad eyes and said, "I still want to be like you. You are the most progressive woman that I have ever met. By the way, I wanted to ask you earlier, but I was bashful, why did you change your name from Berta Friedberg to Isabella Grinevskaya?"

"Do you really think that anybody would look at my work if I sent them plays under the name Friedberg?" Isabella replied.

"Your father was Abraham Shalom Friedberg; he did not change his name and yet became very famous," Lilly promptly responded.

"You do not know, but we suffered from constant hunger. Father barely earned a living and had to work at several jobs at the same time . It was only later on in his life, after he suffered from heart disease and we moved to Warsaw where he got the job as the editor of the newspaper *Hazefira*, did our situation improve a bit. When he died we had no money to bury him," Isabella told Lilly.

Lilly was shocked to hear what Isabella told her.

"Did not thousands of people attend his funeral? Is there not a monument two meters high made of expensive marble on his grave?" she asked.

"You are one hundred percent correct. What you do not know is that everything came from donations," Isabella answered.

They continued riding a bit longer when Isabella exclaimed, "Oh, here we are."

She paid the driver and they got out of the carriage and walked towards the mosque.

Lily was thrilled. The Blue Mosque, or as it was more commonly known the Sultan Ahmet Mosque, was built in 1609 in the center of the city of Constantinople, right opposite the famous Hagia Sophia church. The famed church later became a mosque.

Before entering the mosque they covered their heads with silk scarves and removed their shoes. They walked under the many arches and admired the hand-painted tiles that adorned the walls as well as the mosaic windows, painted in many colors, through which the sun's rays shone.

"Why is it called The Blue Mosque?" Lilly asked.

"The reason is the blue tiles that cover the interior walls, although they have faded with time. Nevertheless, the beautiful hand paintings on them are still noticeable. Legend has it that the architect who designed the grand mosque got his instruction from the sultan, not to spare any money and build the most beautiful mosque in the world," Isabella explained.

"It is enormous. Look at the height of the arches on which the dome rests. Wow! It is huge," Lilly exclaimed with enthusiasm.

Lilly continued walking, looking upwards and absorbing all that surrounded her. She marveled at the beautiful multicolored stained glass that illuminated the interior of the mosque, the hanging oil lamps, the verses of the Koran written in special calligraphy that adorned the walls. After a while, Isabella whispered to her to come out.

"What do we do now Auntie?" Lilly asked in a childish voice, while

holding Isabella's hand.

"Whatever you want," Isabella replied. "Just tell me. We really have no reason to go home, other than to hear the moaning of Ida and Berta. We can go to a nearby park and then continue to the center of town where there are a lot of shops and cafés."

As they were walking through the park, the sky began to turn gray and it seemed as if any moment it would begin to rain. They picked up speed and ran to try to find shelter in one of the cafés.

"Lilly, you should know that the Turkish people of the past, especially the women, did not look like they do today," Isabella began to explain. "Under the rule of the sultan, men were permitted to marry more than one wife and they always walked two steps behind their husbands. The men had to wear red turbans while the women had to have their faces covered with a veil. Laws were all different than today. Since Kemal was elected, everything has changed. Turkey has moved closer to the West, with more openness and tolerance. Many people, especially Jews fleeing from European countries because of rising anti-Semitism, have come to Turkey."

Lily listened attentively to all that Isabella told her. While they were talking a fine rain began to fall.

"Come, let's go in to this restaurant, it looks really cozy," Isabella suggested, pulling Lilly by her sleeve.

After they settled down and ordered sweet black tea, Lilly began to speak.

"Auntie," she began, "do you know that my father Wolf wast in jail? Do you know that my brother David was just barely accepted at the university and must sit on the benches in the rear of the classroom reserved for the "outcast" Jews? Do you know that Cesia's adopted son had to go to study at the university in Italy because there are *numerous clauses* for Jews in Poland? Do you know that I went to a school that had separate classes for Jews and Catholics? I will not continue to tell you about the murders, pogroms and the burning of Jewish businesses. On the other hand, it is my country, it is where I was born, where my parents were born, my grandfather and great-grandfather were born. For better or worse, it is my language, my culture, and I believe that times will change and things will improve. Just look at what is happening in Turkey today. Is that not a good example?"

"Do you not think that the time has come for the Jews to have their own state in line with Herzl's Zionist idea and the statements of the British?" Isabella asked.

"Look at what happened to the Armenians," she added.

At this juncture in the conversation, Isabella lowered her voice almost to a whisper, that Lilly was forced to move closer to her in order to hear what she was saying.

"The Armenians were a people without a country and the Ottoman Turks massacred them. Some say that between 1915 and 1918 one million people were slaughtered, but the real number is estimated to be about a million and a half. The Turks claimed that during the war the Armenians corroborated with the Russians, thus committing acts of treason. The Young Turks, who ruled at that time, would regularly sail the Black Sea with boats loaded with women, children and the elderly and throw them

into the raging waters without mercy, to drown. Young Armenian women were sent to Damascus and sold as sex slaves. A decree was issued to rape their women, hence bringing shame to the Armenians. As a result young Turks went to Armenian villages and centers and hunted down their women. Convoys of families were taken to the desert and left to die of hunger and thirst. There were those that were rounded up and sent to fenced internment camps where they were burned alive."

Isabella warned Lilly not to talk to anybody about it as long as she was in Turkey.

"In Poland such things would be unthinkable," Lilly said as she stared at her plate deep in thought.

"I have never heard about the horrors you just told me."

"That being the case let us turn our conversation to happier topics. What would you like to eat? Should we order grape leaves stuffed with rice and lamb?" Isabella asked?

After hearing the horror stories about the Armenians, Lilly was no longer the same person. She had completely lost her appetite and did not want to eat anything. She asked Isabella to take her home.

"My dear Lilly, you are too sensitive. That is life; people kill other people just because of different beliefs or opinions. That is what happened throughout history. Let's have something to eat and I will tell you all about my work with the charming and terrific Baha'is," Isabella suggested.

Lilly agreed, but her face did not wear that perpetual smile. She suddenly had a very serious look as if she had aged ten years.

While they waited for their orders, Isabella began to tell Lilly about herself.

"The year was 1890 when I arrived in Odessa from Grodno. I was 26 years old and I had already written several plays and stories mostly in Russian, which I knew from home. I sent my plays and stories that I wrote to the Jewish literary circles and they were very well received and excellent reviews were written about them. Many were published several times. Things really started to look up for me when I wrote a serious book, "The Orphan. My next book "From Happiness to the Grave" was published in Warsaw in 1894. In that book, I tried to depict the life of the Jewish middle class and the situation of enlightened Jewish young girls. I then moved to St. Petersburg where I lived for six years. While there, I began corresponding with the Baha'i community who lived in Constantinople. In 1910 I came there to meet the sect's leader, Abdul Baha, and travelled with him to Egypt. After getting to know him and the Baha'i community, I wrote a play about his life and beliefs. I subsequently travelled to France, Azerbaijan and Baku where there was a large concentration of Baha'is, to study them further. I corresponded with Martha Ruth, an American researcher who was associated with and influenced by the Baha'is and also met Abdul Baha when he visited the United States. Here in Constantinople, which is now called Istanbul, I found peace and quiet from all the tension and intensity in my life."

Lilly looked at Isabella with great admiration. She stretched her hand out and clutched the skinny, bony hand of her aunt Berta Friedberg, the small Jewish woman from Grodno, who went on to become Isabella Grinevskaya, whose works had been read by Lev Tolstoy, the author of War and Peace and Anna Karenina.

When they returned home it was quite late in the evening and the two sisters were already sleeping. Lilly pushed herself under her mother's blanket, cuddled up to her and immediately fell asleep. It had been a long day, but a day that would leave an indelible mark her young, sensitive and vulnerable soul.

That evening Lilly decided that her future lay in acting and that she would expend all her efforts and energy to reach that goal. She did not share her decision with anybody, even her aunt Isabella, whom she knew would undoubtedly support her decision.

The parting from Isabella was not easy for Lilly. She felt a strong emotional closeness to her aunt whom she had not met until this trip. Lilly promised Isabella to correspond regularly with her and stay in close touch. Isabella did not promise but did not exclude the possibility of coming for a visit to Poland.

"If my health remains strong, then...." she said.

She then took out of her bag a wrapped package, handed it to Lilly, and said, "I'm sure you'll love this."

When it was time to leave they embraced for a long time and Ida and Berta even cried. Lilly did not cry as she decided to be as strong as her aunt.

As she climbed into the carriage of the Orient Express she looked back one last time to see the skinny form of her aunt Isabella who had enriched her life so much and influenced her decision about her future.

When the train moved, and Lilly sat comfortably in her seat, she began to

remove the wrapping from the gift that she received, 'Oh my, I think I am going to faint," she exclaimed as she removed a Leica camera from the package.

The Deal

Wolf returned from Warsaw agitated and nervous. Moses had cautioned him to try one last time, but not to insist on a deal that would cause him to expend a lot of energy, which certainly would not good for his health. Rosa would come for an hour or two every day to help Wolf and Izio with various house chores. She would always scold Wolf for not napping in the afternoon and for running around as if possessed by a demon.

It had been a week since Wolf had visited the count and he was now emotionally and mentally prepared to meet with him again. Moses gave Wolf his assurance that he would personally come to the signing of the agreement and give the count the money. This would be after the count had given Wolf his final consent and Wolf had reviewed and made sure that all the guarantees were in order.

That morning, the day before the three women returned from Turkey, Wolf went to visit his old friend the jeweler, Leib Lewita.

"Leib, I need your help. But first, you must know that what I am about to tell is confidential and must be kept a secret. You must promise me not talk about it to a soul, not even your wife or children. Is that understood?" Wolf said.

Leib raised his eyebrows in surprise and responded, "May I be buried like an onion, head first in the ground, if I tell anybody."

"Would you stop kidding around? This is a serious matter. I would like you to come to appraise some jewelry for me," Wolf said.

"I will gladly come, but why all the mystery?" Leib asked.

"There is no mystery, just secrecy. The people in question are very important and therefore everything must be done confidentially and not a word may leak out," Wolf said sternly.

"Like I said, with my head in the ground," Leib replied.

A meeting was set up between Wolf, Leib and the count.

At the appointed time, Wolf came with his car to pick Leib up and together they went to the town of Maluszyn.

While traveling the narrow road that connected the town of Włoszczowa with Maluszyn, Leib turned to Wolf and said, "I do not want to meddle in your private affairs, but do you know that your daughter Lilly is very friendly with Lolek, the son of a pharmacist?"

"Lolek is like a family member. I see nothing wrong with what you just told me," Wolf answered.

"Perhaps you do not understand what I am saying. There is love between them and too much closeness. I saw them riding together on his bike,"

Leib said.

"You're pushing your Jewish nose too deeply into places it should not be. I would appreciate it if you busied yourself with other things," Wolf replied angrily.

Leib did not say another word until they arrived at the estate of the count. Wolf parked the car and they both walked toward the count, who was waiting for them at the door. Wolf shook his hand but did not show excessive warmth, whereas Leib almost doubled over while taking a low bow.

When they entered the large sitting room, Leib's eyes darted in all directions and Wolf had to kick his leg to get him to concentrate on the job ahead.

The count brought out a leather bag and placed its contents on the table as Leib took a magnifying glass and began appraising the jewelry.

When he completed the appraisal, he added up the estimated value of each item and came to grand total of eighty thousand zlotys.

"That is what I have to offer," Count Sosnowski said.

Wolf then turned to Leib and asked him, "Are you sure that you have not miscalculated? Perhaps you want to calculate again?"

"Everything depends on the economic and business climate. Today the prices are low because there is an oversupply of jewelry on the market and not much demand. At other times they may be evaluated much higher," Leib answered.

"I will speak to the lender and we will be in touch. If he is satisfied with

this amount, the money will be in your hands in a few days. I will leave a draft of the contract with you," Wolf said to the count.

As they were leaving, the count apologized once again to Wolf for the incident that had taken place between them. Wolf assured him that as far as he was concerned the matter was forgotten..

Changing Course

Lilly very quickly returned to her daily routine. The friendship that had developed between her and her aunt Isabella continued, albeit through the exchange of letters. Lilly told her aunt everything that happened in her life.

To my very dear aunt,

Today I bought an album into which I plan on putting all the photos since my childhood. Of course I will also add all the photos that I am going to take with the camera that you have given me as a gift.

The conversation we had changed my life. I will try to get accepted into an acting school in Lodz. That is my dream and my new goal in life. I always dream of acting comical roles in plays.

*At home everything is fine. We had a letter from your brother Lazer in Texas, which made my mother very happy. Since I got home, I constantly think of the delicious foods we ate at your house, especially the chicken soup with **kneidlach** that my mother made.*

Lolek is upset with me because I left without telling him. I met him in the street and he did not even stop to talk to me. For my part, let him be angry with me.

My dear auntie, I really wish you would come to visit us. I will give up my room for you.

*Hugging you tight,
Your
Lillka*

Since returning from Turkey, Lilly had showed great change. Although she had greatly matured emotionally, her fun and happy-go-lucky nature, so deeply ingrained in her, had not left her. She knew how to distinguish between what was important and what not, and dealt with the important matters with great seriousness.

One day she decided to go to Warsaw and Lodz alone in search of a drama school. While in Lodz she would stay at the home of her Aunt Berta and Uncle Herman, and while in Warsaw she would stay at her Aunt Cesia. It would also give her an opportunity to visit her older brother, David.

Lilly loved to look older than she really was, and so she dressed in the latest styles that she had seen in the foreign fashion magazines. They indeed made her look more mature.

For her trip to Warsaw, she wore a tight-fitting long black skirt, a white silk shirt with a lace collar, a wide brown leather belt with a large buckle, a short checkered jacket with large buttons and brown shiny leather boots with low heels. On her head she wore her knitted hat.

She got on the bus that went directly from Włoszczowa to Lodz, where she intended to meet her aunt Berta and Uncle Herman.

When she arrived in Lodz it was already afternoon. Lilly waited at the bus stop for her Uncle Herman to pick her up.

When she saw that he was not there yet, she went into a nearby café, sat down at a table and ordered tea and a piece of cake.

While she was sipping her tea, a man dressed in a nice suit, with a folded newspaper under his arm, approached her table and politely asked, "May I join you?" Lilly looked at him and nodded. He sat down across from her and unfolded his newspaper. She studied him and decided that he looked close to sixty years old. Although he dressed fashionably, his age showed and she decided that he was her father's age.

Without looking up from his paper, he suddenly asked "Where did you just come from?"

Without hesitation Lilly replied "Why are you so interested to know?"

"Madam, why are you getting so upset? I see before me a beautiful woman, sitting alone, dressed fashionably, so I try to woo her. Is that illegal in this country?" the man commented.

"Do you know how old I am?" she asked the man.

"What difference does age make? We live in a new era. Poland is becoming more like Paris, London and Rome. We are more modern and do not concern ourselves with age," the man answered.

"I am a minor, barely sixteen," Lilly lied, deducting a year from her age.

Hearing Lilly's words, the man became panic stricken. He got up and rushed out of the café into the street where he disappeared among the passers-by. Lilly smiled to herself with great satisfaction and thought, "At least I made the right impression with my clothing."

Uncle Herman finally arrived and stopped in front of the bus stop. He began looking around, but could not find Lilly. She, however, saw him and began running towards him waving her hands so that he should notice her and not leave without her. On the way home, Lilly told him about the poor guy who wanted to woo her and how he suddenly ran away. They both had a good laugh.

The next day, Berta accompanied Lilly to *Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna*, the academy of arts. She was so excited about going there; her dream was to act. See, her dream was to become a reality.

However, very quickly this dream was shattered. She was informed that the school was only in its opening phase and they did not even have a permanent teaching staff yet. At that time, they were not accepting any students and would probably not open that year at all.

Lilly left the school in tears, very disappointed.

She remained another night in Lodz spending her time with her cousins and reminiscing with Berta about their trip to Turkey. She spent a pleasant evening with her Uncle Herman who told her for, the umpteenth time, how he had been summoned to Włoszczowa to supervise her birth, and how he became the waiter when he had to serve the guests who had arrived for the reception celebrating her birth.

Aunt Berta and her husband Herman were both dentists and had a private clinic on the ground floor of the building in which they lived. Since they were quite busy, neither of them had the time to accompany Lilly the next morning to the train station. She had to go alone in a taxi that Herman ordered; he even prepaid the fare.

There was a twice-daily train from Lodz to Warsaw. Fortunately for Lilly, she did not have to wait long before she heard the sound of the engine as it pulled into the station.

She boarded the train and sat at the window of her compartment, as she wanted to photograph the passing scenery. Since this was her first experience with a camera, she did not realize that if one takes pictures while moving, the photographs come out blurry.

As Lilly walked out of the train station in Warsaw, she felt very proud of herself. Men everywhere turned their heads and stared at her as she passed them. There were even those who

winked at her or passed comments and compliments to her. She walked confidently down the street, with her head held high just like her aunt Isabella, who was her role model.

As she got closer to Ogrodowa Street, where Moses and Cesia lived, she saw an old lady selling flowers. She picked a bunch of roses, paid for them and continued on her way. She climbed the stairs to the apartment and rang the doorbell. After a long moment the door opened and Moses stood in front of her, his hair disheveled and his face red.

"Where are Cesia, and Jerzy?" she asked as she walked in and placed the roses in a vase that was on the table.

"Jerzy is at a friend's house and Cesia is napping" he answered.

Lilly laughed at the sight of his wrinkled clothes and unbuttoned shirt.

She went into Jerzy's room and lay down on his bed to rest. A while later, Cesia came out of her bedroom, all dressed-up and wearing heavy makeup.

"Come, my dear" she said. "Let's go and take a stroll in town."

They left the apartment and started walking toward Park Saski. On the way, they were supposed to pick up Jerzy and his friend who lived on Chlodna Street. Cesia suggested that they bypass Krochmalna Street, which was inhabited mostly

by Jews but also infested with thieves and prostitutes.

While walking, they decided to go the park first and pick Jerzy up on their way back.

"He'll be bored with our company. Let's give them more time to play together," Cesia said.

At the entrance to Park Saski there was big fountain with benches alongside it. They sat down on a bench facing the fountain. Which splashed them when it reached its highest point..

"Auntie, do you know that when I was a little girl, my mother used to sing a song to me which I hav suddenly remembered. It went like this."

*Near the fountain in Saski Park,
A boy and a girl were clinging to each other in the dark.
No fault of hers, just like with Lilia
Except that her name was Cecilia.
His huge hands around her he did wrap,
Stole from her a kiss and she his watch with the leather strap.*

"I know the song and it goes on and on, each stanza telling a different episode," Cesia said as she laughed.

She then became more solemn as she continued to speak.

"Tell me my dear Lilly, what are your plans for your future? I am sure you have some. Your mother called me a few days ago and told me that you want

to go to drama school and become an actress. Are you serious about it? Do you really know what you want to do?"

Lilly was taken aback by such blunt questions and a little surprised. However, she quickly regained her composure and answered her aunt very emphatically.

"Yes, I would like to study drama and become an actress. The theater appeals to me very much. My problem is the wretched location and situation in which I find myself. My parents have chosen to live in the town of Włoszczowa, which is surrounded by villages full of farmers and hog growers. I would have no choice, but to marry a farmer and have ten children. He will come home drunk every evening, and instead of giving me a kiss on my cheek he will plant his fist on my cheek, because that is what he is used to doing. I will have to stand all day and cook pigs' intestines stuffed with potatoes and fat for him."

"Oh, how you exaggerate. Who said that you will marry a Polish farmer? Where do you get these ideas from?" Cesia remarked.

"Well, ok, not a Polish farmer," Lilly retorted."Then I will marry a ye student with a beard and side locks, a big black hat and have ten children with him. He will sit in his room all day praying and studying, talk to me in Yiddish, which I do not understand, while I cook gefilte fish, which I hate."

Cesia doubled over with laughter."I see why you want to study acting. You are really funny," she remarked.

Lilly pulled out the camera from her bag.

"Auntie, please pose for me so that I can take your picture," Lilly requested Cesia as she stepped back to get the desired angle. Cesia tipped her black hat to one side and stood ready to be photographed.

"Auntie, please lift your dress up so that your thighs are visible. Look a bit vulgar and sexy," Lilly demanded.

Cesia pulled her dress down to completely cover her legs.

She scolded Lilly and said, "What is with you? You are embarrassing me. I am not a young model. Take the picture already. People are staring at me as if I am a celebrity or something."

Lilly photographed Cesia from all different angles.

Cesia sat down on a bench and Lilly sat next to her and said, "Auntie, would you like me to add another stanza to the song we sang? It will be about Aunt Cesia who sat near the fountain in the afternoon totally naked, while the crowd around clapped their hands in applause?"

"So now you have become a poet, too? We have been sitting here long enough. It's time for us to move our bones a little."

Lilly held Cesia's hand like a little girl who wanted to be close to her mother. They walked along the paths in the park, passing countless young couples who were sitting and embracing each other while just staring at the sky.

A True Friend?

"Not all that glistens is gold." with those words, Moses stressed to Wolf that it was imperative that Leib Lewitas be present at the next meeting with the count.

"The count will take offense, and view it as a lack of trust in him," Wolf said trying to get Moses to change his mind. But Moses refused to compromise.

"I'd rather the count be offended, than I lose money," Moses argued. Wolf was left speech less; he had nothing to say in response.

The meeting with the count was set for the weekend. The count had chosen Saturday, since he knew that both Moses and Wolf were not religious and did not regard Saturday as different from other days of the week. Thus, the meeting was set for Saturday.

Wolf acted as the intermediary between Moses and the count, carrying messages back and forth, until everything was finally agreed upon and all disagreements were sorted.

Moses arrived by car the day before and spent the evening at Wolf's home, where he also left his suitcase with the money. He preferred to sleep in the only hotel in town where he rented two rooms, one for himself and one for his chauffeur.

The next morning Moses first went to pick up Wolf and then to pick up

Leib.

Leib had asked that they pick him up a few blocks away from his house, as he did not want the members of his family see him getting into a car on the Sabbath. He set out on foot and walked to the end of the street, turned right, when he saw the vehicle parked. He first passed the car and when he was sure that nobody was looking, he jumped inside and the chauffeur quickly pulled away.

During the trip to Maluszyn, Moses gave Wolf final instructions with regard to the loan and repeated all the agreed-upon terms and conditions. Moses promised Leib a tidy sum if he did his job professionally, which was mainly to note if there were any low-grade jewelry or damaged diamonds.

When they arrived at the count's estate, he came towards them and stood on the balcony. He was dressed in a suit with the jacket carelessly draped over his shoulders, wearing a fashionable straw hat and dark glasses.

Wolf introduced the count to Moses and they shook hands warmly. When the count saw Leib, he put on a serious face and commented, "Is he not the one who did the appraisal? Why is he here? I have no more jewelry to give as collateral."

Wolf tried to explain Leib's presence by saying that he had lost the list of jewelry items that he had appraised, so he came along to prepare a new one.

The count understood right away that the reason Leib was present was because there was a lack of trust on the part of Moses. However, he did not want to show that he was in any way insulted, so he let the whole thing pass and made nothing of it.

"You can count the money," Moses said to the count as he opened the suitcase.

The count, who wanted to point out that unlike Moses who did not trust him, he trusted Moses, said that it was not necessary for him to count the money as he believed that it was all there.

"I insist that you count the money," Moses said to the count.
"Everybody can make mistakes, me included."

The count began counting the money, and had to repeat it several times when he realized that he made a mistake and his counting was wrong.

It was finally decided that Leib should count the money. When he completed the count there was an extra two hundred zlotys.

"Include them in the package. I must have made a mistake," Moses said. He then added in jest "If it was less, I would have counted the lot again."

While Leib was busy examining the jewelry, Moses and the count signed the loan agreement with all its terms and conditions. Leib did not find any defective or different pieces of jewelry, and since he

really had not really lost the original list he compared the two appraisals without the count noticing.

The list of jewelry items that was given to Moses was attached to the contract and placed in the suitcase.

"I will safeguard them like them as I would the apple of my eye," Moses promised the count.

Before they parted, the count approached Wolf, hugged him and said, "You are a true friend. I wish I had more friends like you. If ever you need help, you know to whom to turn. I hope you will return to work for me once again."

"I am prepared to return," Wolf responded. He added jokingly, "But only for a game of bridge."

They left the mansion with the count accompanying them to the car.

The Uncertain Wedding

Uncle Ilia was about to marry off his daughter Stefania, Mila's older sister. The groom, Caesar Romanov, a lawyer who was two meters tall, slender and red-haired, had been born in Russia to a Russian father and a Jewish mother.

The wedding was for mid-August 1933 in a hall that Ilia rented in Warsaw. Cesar's parents were divorced and his father lived in Russia with another son. Cesar moved to Poland during the Communist revolution, with his mother who raised him on her own while working as a private chef for the wealthy and saw to it that he finished law school. They still lived together.

Caesar met Stefania when he began working as a legal adviser to a Polish newspaper and she worked as a journalist. Since Stefania's mother had died in her sleep of heart failure less than a year ago, Ilia decided to wait until the year of mourning was up ,to have the wedding for Stefania.

Invitations were sent to family members and friends and to a small number of prominent people who Dr. Ilia treated.

Rumors began filtering into Poland from Germany about the violence and harassment being perpetrated against the Jews. The reports were mainly brought by the refugees who fled Germany, leaving behind most of their assets, escaping in the dark of night.

Polish newspapers reported in January about the rise of the Nazi party to power, without a mention of the plight of the six hundred thousand Jews who were under their rule.

Stefania had contact with many journalists who traveled to Germany to cover the rise of the Nazi party. When they returned they reported about the gloomy atmosphere that existed in Germany and of the radical German press that wrote hateful articles, especially against the

Jews.

They reported that on April 1, 1933, SA troopers stood in front of Jewish shops carrying placards that read, "Germans! Defend yourselves! Do not buy from the swine Jews!"

On that day, "brown shirt" thugs raided Jewish-owned businesses, burnt merchandise, smashed windows and rioted in Jewish neighborhoods, beating anyone who stood in their way.

Nazi Germany declared an economic boycott of the Jews "who are trying to take over the world." As a result of the boycott, which directly affected their livelihoods, many fled the country, trying to gain entry into the United States or Great Britain. Only a select few were successful in reaching those foreign shores, as immigration into those countries was closed to the Jews. Most Jews therefore fled eastward to Poland.

Stefania told her father all that she knew about the situation, which she learned from journalists and from accounts reported by the refugees arriving from Austria and Germany. In light of the circumstances, it was decided to cancel the wedding, and instead Stefania and Caesar opted for a simple civil wedding in the Town Hall, without an audience. The wedding would be followed by a meal at the family home attended by close family members only.

The wedding took place as scheduled, despite the marriage license having been issued only two days earlier. Besides the bride and groom, the only ones in attendance at the civil wedding were two

witnesses, friends of Stefania and Caesar from the newspaper.

The entire extended family came for the modest but festive wedding meal. They included the famous composer Julius Wolfson, who was in Poland at the time to visit his sister, Paulina, Wolf's mother and also Berta and Herman Mirabel and their daughters. Wolf came with Ida, Paulina and Lilly. Izio who was in Warsaw came with David. Aunt Eugenia and her husband Stanislaw arrived with Rosa, Moses and Cesia came with their son Jerzy.

The real surprise came when suddenly somebody totally unexpected walked in; even his parents did not know about his anticipated arrival.

David and Adam fell into each other's arms and embraced. They were so happy to see each other, since they had not seen each other since Adam had gone to study in Italy. Both were in the middle of their third year of medical school. They sat some distance away from the celebrants so that they could talk without being disturbed.

"How is school?" David opened the conversation.

"I thought you would ask how the girls are." Adam commented.

"I take it back," David said. "How are the girls?"

"Aside from my steady girlfriend, there are always plenty of girls constantly cackling around me to keep me company. The truth is that Italian girls are not as flighty and irresponsible as Polish girls. It is much more difficult to get close to them," Adam answered.

"Are you complaining? Do you want to come back?" David asked with a smile on his lips.

"No," Adam replied. "Actually, things are working out quite well for me over there. I will probably marry Rosie, as we are in love, "Then winking his eye he continued and said, "What I just told you is a secret that must remain between us. Now, what is going on with you?"

"I have girlfriend that I go out with often. I have written to you about her in one of my letters. Her name is Klara, a Jewish girl from Warsaw.

The problem is that on my last trip home for vacation, I met Eva, a good friend of Lilly and she just hypnotized me. I constantly think about her and it is disturbs me in my studies. On the other hand, it motivates me to finish quickly and return to Wloszczowa for a vacation in order to be with her," David said.

"Why does she not come to Warsaw to be with you?" Adam asked.

"No, no. I want to concentrate on my studies. If she would be in my room, I would never want to get out of bed," David replied laughingly.

"Hey you guys. What is all this gossip?" Lilly shouted to them from the edge of the table.

"You're right, come here. It's been a while since I have spoken to you," Adam shouted to her.

The music and the loud voices of the guests in the crowded room disturbed their conversation. Adam stood up and pushed himself

closer to Lilly so that he could hear her.

A while later, Lilly put her ever-present camera on a tripod and focused it at the young couple."Do not move," she shouted. Nobody heard her and kept on pushing her around. She knew that the photograph would come out blurry, as she had experienced on the moving train.

Moses was proud of his sons and looked at them with admiration.

Jerzy had grown into a handsome young boy. At age eight he was taller than other boys his age. He studied at a government school in Warsaw and received top grades, especially in mathematics. He also liked to draw and write short stories.

Adam, the eldest son, was on his way to become a physician. The profession was really suited for him, since he was always ready to advise and investigate the nature of the problem. He respected the medical profession and took it very seriously, despite the fact that he liked drinking, dancing and women.

Moses knew that Jerzy was the only one of his sons who would follow in his footsteps and eventually take over his business. He took him wherever he went to show him the ropes; to business meetings and even the golf course. He wanted him to be his clone.

Stefania was the shining star of that festive evening. Although she was rather scrawny and not especially pretty, she was full of charm. She was energetic and curious, and had to know all the gossip that was

taking place in the family. She was the one who had given the warnings about the suffering of the Jews in Germany and Austria.

"Your friends, the Poles, exaggerate their stories. You know that not everything they say is true," Adam said as he gulped down glass after glass of vodka from the bottle that he had "confiscated" and would not let anybody else have anything from.

Suddenly Stanislaw got involved and interrupted the conversation and told the following tale.

"I personally have met a Jew from Munich who arrived penniless. He told me that he had a business that dealt in hides and another that dealt in hats, both in the city center. Three months ago, on the first of April, soldiers appeared at his store and ordered him out. When he refused, they beat, kicked and punched him until he fell unconscious. When he awoke, he found himself lying in the street in wet, torn clothes that reeked of urine from the soldiers. Passers-by did not even pay attention to him, let alone help him.

That evening, he packed a few belongings, took his wife who is sick and suffers from cancer, their ten year-old daughter and fled the country in his car without informing any of his friends or his family. They are presently in Wloszczowa, being cared for by the Jewish Labor Bund, the political party which promotes political, cultural and social autonomy of Jewish workers and seeks to combat anti-Semitism. They would like to continue to the United States; however they are in need of visas."

Everybody listened intently to Stanislaw's story, and silence reigned for a long time. Ilia broke the silence and said, "Yes, the situation in Germany

is not a good one. Let's hope it doesn't get worse or reach us in Poland." Adam sat down next to Lilly and hugged her warmly, while she beamed from happiness. She really loved her arrogant red-headed cousin.

"So what is news in your love life, my sweet Lilly," he asked. "Is there a man in your life?"

"You're the man of my life," she laughed and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

"I am serious, Lilly. You can tell me. I am as silent as the grave and will not tell anybody," he laughed.

"There is somebody, but it is not serious" she replied.

"Do you love him, that lucky person?" he asked.

"I really do not know, but he loves me a lot," Lilly answered.

"That is not good. You have to decide logically if he is right for you, not with your heart," Adam said.

"I prefer to follow my heart, but it seems that it will not happen," Lilly replied.

"I know sweetheart, you were always very rational," he said.

Lilly noticed that Adam could hardly sit straight. He was tilting to one side as if about to topple over. She stood up and Adam lay down on the couch.

She walked over to Caesar who was smoking a cigarette near the window, as some of the guests also came over to take leave of him.

"Lilly, did you enjoy yourself this evening?" he asked.

"It was terrific. The two of you make a lovely couple. You are two talented, beautiful and smart people. May you have a wonderful life together," Lilly said.

"Wow, those were some compliments," Caesar said as he lowered his head with humility.

"Where will you be living?" Lilly asked.

"Ilia insists that for the time being we live with him," Caesar answered.

"It makes sense. This way you can save some money and buy your own apartment," Lilly responded.

"We already own an apartment. Ilia bought two apartments in a nearby building, one for Stefania and one for Mila. They are currently empty and all they need is furniture" he told Lilly.

"That is wonderful. I did not know all this," Lilly commented.

"Do you still have any relatives in Russia?" She then asked

"Yes," he answered. My father and my step brother live close to Moscow."

"Do you not want to go to visit them," she was curious.

"At this time it is very dangerous. It would be a one-way trip. I don't want to endanger myself."

While Lilly and Caesar were talking, other guests began coming over to bid him farewell.

Lilly went over to her father, who was sitting in an armchair with his head leaning to one side and sleeping. She woke him and together with David and Izio, they helped him down to the car. David drove the whole family back to Włoszczowa.

Irena

One of Lilly's classmates in Girls School Number Two, which she

attended, was a girl named Irena Oleinikowa. They were not the closest of friends and would only occasionally get together outside of school. Irena was a pretty girl with short blonde hair, large almond-shaped eyes and a gentle voice that was a bit childish sounding. Beneath her delicate, feminine and fragile demeanor, she hid a strong, opinionated and stubborn personality. Lilly admired and liked her.

Several days before traveling to Warsaw for her cousin Stefania's wedding, Lilly met Irena near Rynek Square while shopping for vegetables at the Jewish greengrocer whose stand was at the corner of a hidden side street. Ever since Lilly had told Irena about her trip to Istanbul, she loved to meet Lilly and listen to her interesting stories. Before Lilly left for Warsaw for Stefania's wedding, Irena asked her if they could meet when she returned and she would tell her at length all about the trip. When Lilly told her about her camera, they arranged to meet and take photographs of each other.

When David arrived in Włoszczowa, Lilly asked him not to let Ewa know that he was in town as she had a surprise for him. She had invited Irena to their home for dinner without his knowledge. She did mention to Irena that her brother was home from Warsaw for a few days, and it would be well worth her while to meet him.

Irena arrived at the set time looking like a model. She wore a tight-fitting skirt that accentuated all the curves of her body along with high-heeled shoes that made her look taller than she really was.

Lilly met Irena at the front door and accompanied her to the second floor where the dining room was located. The entire family was seated

around the dinner table while Ida was in the kitchen serving the food.

When they entered the dining room, Lilly announced, "Let me introduce you to my good friend and classmate, Irena Oleunikowa."

David rose, approached Irena and kissed her on the palm of her hand.

"What a gentleman," Irena said with half a smile.

Lilly seated Irena next to David, who could not take his eyes off her.

"Oh, so you live in Warsaw," she questioned David.

"So, I live in Warsaw," he answered in the same tone of voice as her question.

"I heard from Lilly that in another year you will graduate from dental school," Irena said.

"You heard right, but inaccurate. It is more like a year and a half to two years. It is up to me, if I pass all the exams on time," he replied amusingly, after having sipped a few glasses of vodka.

"I like you," she said without blinking

"And I like you," he answered.

"Do you always repeat the words of the questioner? Perhaps you can try to be a bit more original," Irena commented to David.

"You're right. Come let's go outside, I would like to smoke and smoking is not allowed in the house," he answered.

As they stood up and headed for the garden, David announced, "We are going out to smoke and will be back in a few minutes. Continue eating without us."

David took a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket, put one in his mouth, lit it and offered one to Irena. They stood in the dark, smoking.

David felt her drawing closer to him, so he reached out and touched her shoulder. She moved closer to him, suddenly grabbed him and placed her lips tightly against his lips. Irena threw her cigarette away and pulled him to the back of the yard where they stood hugging and kissing each other. She pushed her hands under his shirt and eventually unbuttoned it completely.

While the family members were eating dinner on the upper floor, in a dark corner of the yard below Irene, her beautiful face shining in the moonlight, was passionately fondling David, who was leaning against a thick tree trunk so as not to stumble.

When they returned to the table, they acted as if they were old friends. He was totally infatuated with her, while she did not stop cackling like a chicken in love. Grandma Pauline did not like the scene at all; she knew that it would cause David great distress and drag him into deep trouble.

Irena was rather mature for her age, however a bit ahead of time. She

behaved in a liberated, unrestricted and unrestrained manner, like a mare without reins. That was why she was glued to Lilly and could not get enough of the stories of Lilly's Aunt Isabella Grinevskaya, the liberated novelist, playwright and feminist who lived alone in Istanbul.

David extended his stay for another week. He wanted to spend more time with his brother Izio, help his father, talk to his grandmother Pauline and to hear his mother's songs and enjoy her cooking, but more than anything he wanted to be with Irena. Every evening, he would take his father's car, pick her up and go into the forest, where they would find a dark, quiet corner and make love. He completely stopped thinking about Ewa who was waiting for him in vain.

At The River Pilica

On the day before he was set to return to Warsaw, David suggested to Lilly that they spend the day together by the River Pilica. David asked Lilly if she would mind if he invited Irena to join them. Lilly could not refuse; after all Irena was also a friend of hers. Because she did not want to trail after them, Lilly decided to ask Lolek to join. Although

there was no great love between David and Lolek, David agreed, so as not to hurt his sister's feelings.

The next morning, they loaded the car with a large basket filled with sandwiches, fruits, a jug of wine, napkins and glasses. After driving for about an hour on winding paths among groves and plowed fields where people were cultivating the black earth, they finally came close to the river. In the distance they could see fishermen spreading out their fishing nets.

In order to get across the river, it was necessary to walk over a wooden bridge supported by concrete pillars. On the other side there was a beach of small stones which was very difficult to walk on. The water was very cold and they could not even dip a foot into it. They spread out their blankets and sat down next to each other. Lilly put her camera on a tripod and focused it on them. She asked one of the fisherman to take the picture, as all he had to do was to push the button.

Although it was an autumn day, the sun was blazing overhead. Lilly handed everybody a sandwich and a glass of wine.

"Nazdrowie," Lilly shouted as she raised her glass.

"Let us have many more opportunities like this one," Lolek proclaimed as he took a sip of wine from his glass.

David moved away from the group and lit a cigarette. He looked at Irena who was engrossed in conversation with Lilly. He looked from

one to another as if trying to compare them and noticed how beautiful they both were. They were so similar to each other, yet so different.

David realized that however hard he tried to adapt to Polish customs he would never be a real Pole. Not because he did not want to, but because there would be constant reminders of who he was and where he came from and that angered him greatly.

"Why are we different from them?" he repeatedly asked himself. "Why this negative attitude toward us? Because many of us dress differently than them? Our language is different? Our religion is different?"

Lolek approached David and asked him for a cigarette. David quickly lit one and gave it to him.

"Lolek, take a look at those two beautiful girls, do you see any difference between them?" David asked.

"Why certainly, one has blonde hair and the other black hair," Lolek answered and they both burst out laughing.

When they finished their lunch, they walked to the ruins of an ancient fortress that stood crumbling at the edge of the river.

At that point they separated into couples and each went into a different hidden part of the building. Irena pulled David by his hand until she found a deserted corner where she stopped and began hugging him and pressing her lips onto his.

"Boy am I going to miss you," she said as she showered him with

kisses.

"I am going to miss you too," he answered. "There is nothing I can do about it, I must return to my studies."

"Come back to see me soon, otherwise I will surprise you in Warsaw," she told him.

"Do not surprise me. Do not come. You will be disappointed," David said in a firm tone.

"Why. Is it because I will find someone else in your bed?" she asked as her face turned serious.

"Absolutely not. The reason is, because I will not have time for you. When I am studying, I have no time for anything," David replied.

"Okay, my dear, do not be angry, I will not surprise you. I will send you a postcard with the date of my arrival."

"You make a joke out of everything. Can't you be serious," he said as he pulled her closer to him and held her tightly.

"I am serious and not joking."

David looked at his watch and said, "It's time to go back. I still have a lot of things to prepare at home before I leave."

When they left the castle they saw Lilly and Lolek already sitting in the car, waiting. Lilly was sitting in the front and Lolek in the back.

The entire trip back, David and Irena acted like strangers. Irena and Lolek, who were sitting in the rear talked to each other, while Lilly who sat in the front next to her brother and kept looking at him with love and admiration.

Eyeing Adek

Simon Zaidenbaum ran the family business very efficiently. He expanded it and bought the land behind his warehouse where he built a new and modern sawmill. He had installed a small crane and a machine with rollers and chains that made the lifting and transporting of the huge boards from the factory to the warehouse and also from the warehouse to the loading area much easier.

He called it "automation" which saved him a lot of manpower. "The crane does the work of four people and I now hire only one person," he proudly told anybody who would listen to him.

Adek, his younger brother who was fragile and rather gentle, was involved mainly in sales and marketing and in the accounting of the company. He did not see his life's mission to stay in the company, as he wanted to study medicine. However, his father made the decision

for him. He would always tell Adek that it was important for him to work in the company, since one day it would be his.

Adek was determined to study medicine, but did not know how he could pay for his studies without financial help from his father. He tried to persuade his father, but to no avail. Isaac, his father, stubbornly stood his ground, until one day he nicknamed his son "heart of stone," and from that day on, he did not speak to Adek.

Isaac's wife, Sarah, tried to make peace between them, but it seemed that both stubbornly stood their ground; it was impossible to persuade either of them to even sit at the same table to talk.

Adek thought about moving to Argentina. He had heard from Lilly how her uncle Muniek had settled there and was getting along quite well. He also heard that life there was very good and that the standard of living was very high. Since the borders to America were essentially closed, Argentina was the next best option.

He travelled to Warsaw to arrange his travel papers, passports and other necessary documents. When he returned home, he heard that his mother had been taken to hospital after suddenly fainting at home. He immediately went to the hospital where he found his father and brother walking around in the hallway with sad faces.

"How is mother?" he asked Simon.

"They do not know. She lost consciousness and she has been in a coma ever since," he answered as tears were streaming from his eyes.

Isaac moved away from both of them.

"Talk to him, he is completely broken," Simon said to Adek.

Adam went to his father and put his hand on his shoulder. His father looked at him and burst into tears, hugged him tightly and cried on his shoulder.

Sobbing, Isaac said, "I would give everything I have for her to recover."

Trying to calm his father down, Adek said, "Mother will get better."

Suddenly, Wolf appeared with Lilly in the waiting room and headed straight towards Isaac and his sons.

"How is Sarah?" Wolf asked.

"No change at all. She is still unconscious. The doctors think she suffered a stroke. Let's hope she recovers, otherwise we will all die with her, from grief and anxiety," Isaac said.

Lilly went over to Adek, whom she had known for most of her life, and felt like part of his family, and said, "It's a pity that we have to get together under such circumstances."

Adek nodded head, but his thoughts were not on what she had said. He was worried about his mother and thinking about her.

Lilly sensed his fragility and went over to hug him and allow him lean on her, when he suddenly pressed his lips to her cheek and kissed her.

Looking into her eyes, he said, "How nice of you to come, my Lilka."

"My Lilka? What nonsense. I am not his Lilka," she thought to herself. She moved away from him so that he did not touch her.

"Lilka," he said, "If mother would open her eyes now and see the two of us together, she would immediately get better."

Lilly realized that she most likely wanted her as a daughter-in-law. "That is why she would get better and be so happy," she thought to herself.

She then looked at Adek, and saw that he was no longer the boy with the constant runny nose. He had changed and become a clean cut, tall, good-looking young man, well-dressed, with a neatly trimmed beard.

Unexpectedly she began to like him. She did not display any outward interest in him, but she definitely would not carry on rejecting any of his advances.

"After all, he is good looking, rich and Jewish," she smiled to herself.

Sarah never regained consciousness and three days later she died. The funeral was scheduled for the afternoon of the following day in order to allow people from distant cities to attend.

Isaac was despondent, did not sleep all night and just sat in the kitchen and prayed. His house filled up with visitors who came to console him.

Wolf, Ida and Lilly arrived for the funeral. Since they had been such close friends of Isaac for many years, Wolf thought it appropriate to have a private word with him. However, Simon and Adek asked him to leave their father alone.

The next morning two women from the burial society came to prepare the body for burial according to Jewish tradition. The women washed her, combed her hair, cleaned her fingernails and toenails, anointed her body with fragrant oil, closed her eyelids and mouth and then wrapped her body in a white shroud made of linen. Finally they covered the body with a black cloth.

Before leaving, one of the volunteers said in a trembling voice, "We beg for your forgiveness if during this purification ritual we did not treat you with the utmost respect. We ask of you to entreat God and advocate on our behalf and on behalf of all of the Nation of Israel."

At the end of the ritual they quietly left.

At the appointed time a wagon, with a stretcher to carry the body on it, arrived. The funeral procession began at Sarah's home. Isaac, supported by his two sons, went first. Right behind them, four men wearing hats and dressed in black led the wagon. Everybody walked slowly behind them with the Jewish members of city council leading the mourners. Next came Wolf, Ida, Lilly, Izio, Eugenia, Stanislaw, with Roza behind them and finally the rest of the Jewish participants from the town. A very large crowd accompanied Sarah to the Jewish cemetery, which was walking distance from her home.

All along the side of the road the non-Jewish townspeople stood watching. They were used to seeing Jewish funerals, but a funeral of this size they had never seen. When the wagon carrying the body arrived at the cemetery, the line stretched all the way back to the center of town. The crowd of mourners was estimated to be several thousand people.

"Father, where did this popularity for Sarah come from? You could think that a queen was being buried," Lilly asked her father.

"You are right my dear Lilly," Wolf answered. "Most of the people do not know her at all. This is more of a demonstration than a funeral."

"A demonstration?" she asked. "Against whom and what?"

"Since most Jewish members of the city council have been dismissed and there is a ban on demonstrations, the Jews could not protest against the decision or show their dissatisfaction. The funeral therefore afforded them the opportunity to gather in large numbers and demonstrate against the government," Wolf answered.

"The Jews are a very wise people," she commented.

"I would not bet on that," Wolf answered. "If they were a smart people they would unify against the government, instead of disagreeing and creating associations and movements to advance their philosophies. The government knows how to exploit this divisiveness by constantly issuing new decrees against us."

"First and foremost we are Poles. Why must we first be Jews and then Poles," Lilly asked.

"That is a good question. It is not that we decide what we are first. It is decided for us whether we agree with it or not. There is not much we can do to change that," Wolf answered.

Since his incarceration, Wolf's had wavered in his views of Poland and his uncompromising loyalty to it. He felt that Poland had betrayed him and his pro-Polish views were no longer as strong as in the past.

At the end of the funeral, everyone went over to Isaac and his sons to comfort them. Adek hugged Lilly and whispered into her ear, "I hope to see you again, under other circumstances of course." Lilly smiled at him but said nothing.

Izio Intervenes

The winter of 1934 was a particularly severe one; temperatures dropped to minus thirty degrees Celsius for an entire week. Snowfall measured a half a meter and ice accumulated on the roads, which became extremely treacherous except for horse-drawn sleds.

Well in advance of the harsh winter, Stanislaw brought home dry logs

for the fireplace and stored them under the steps at the entrance of the house, covered lest they rot from the damp.

The brick fireplace on the ground floor had a huge iron chimney which helped spread the heat to the residential floor. The interior of the house was therefore warm and cozy.

Distributors could not make deliveries, thus store shelves were empty. Basic and staple foods were in short supply and in some places nonexistent.

People were unable to go out, to work or to school. Izio, who was twelve, was elated that he did not have to go to school. He was meant to be taking the entrance exams to the "ORT" vocational school to become a dental technician, a very common occupation in the family. The weather gave him more time to prepare for the test at home. Most people spent their days at home cooking, reading, knitting and doing other domestic chores.

Grandma Pauline knitted hats and doilies while Lilly knitted gloves for handling hot pots, as well as a long scarf that she was going to give Davidka as a gift. Ida was busy making soups and baking bread. She also made a large pot of *cholent* which she left simmering all night on the glowing embers. The delicious smell of the *cholent* spread throughout the house. Wolf complained that the smell stimulated his appetite and he walked around hungry the entire evening. He also found it difficult to fall asleep. Everyone laughed, because they knew that he would be getting up several times during the night for "tastings."

Lilly had hoped that, as usual, Lolek would come over to visit her. After two days of sitting at home doing nothing but knitting, she felt like she was suffocating. Everybody was immersed in their work and a strange silence reigned in the house. Not a sound was heard in the street other than the church bells that chimed every hour. Silence all over.

Lilly asked Izio in an imploring voice, "What do you think happened to Lolek that he did not come to visit me? Have you seen him lately?"

"Ask him yourself. Would you want me to go and get him for you?"

Lilly nodded her head and said, "Please go and fetch him; I am so bored here."

Izio stood up, put on his coat and warm knitted cap that covered his head and half his face. "If I fall and break a bone, it will be your fault," he said.

Lilly smiled and motioned to him to hurry up.

Izio instead went straight to the house of Adek Zaidenbaum and knocked on the door. As Adek opened the door, he was surprised to see Izio standing in front of him.

"What brings you here in this cold weather?" he asked.

"Lilly sent me to ask if you would like to come and visit her," he lied.

Adek, in shock by the request, quickly recovered, and said, "Gladly. Wait one moment and I will be on my way," he responded.

Izio and Adek braved the cold and headed to Lilly's house. As they crossed Rynek Square, they saw a familiar figure approaching. It was Lolek.

"Hi Izio. How is Lilly? I'd like to come over to visit. What do you think," Lolek asked.

Izio did not hesitate and immediately answered, "Lilly is ill. It would be best if you waited a few days."

Lolek mumbled something, made a gesture with his hand and changed direction towards his house.

"You did not tell me that Lilly was sick," Adek said.

"She is not sick," Izio answered and increased his pace. Adek smiled and patted him on his shoulder.

When they entered the home, the shocked look on Lilly's face said it all. Adek realized something was not right but did not react. Lilly came up to him and kissed him on both cheeks. Adek then went over to Ida and to Grandma Pauline and kissed their hands.

"How is your father getting along?" Paulina asked.

"It is difficult for him, but he realizes that life must continue and we must go forward," Adek replied.

"And what are you planning to do with yourself?" she asked in her natural prying way.

"Because of my good grades in school, I have been accepted in medical school in Krakow. This, despite the fact that they allow only ten percent of their student body to be Jewish," he answered.

"I was hoping you would become her husband. I really like you," Paulina said.

"Grandma," Lilly exclaimed. "Stop it. You are embarrassing both Adek and me."

Lilly took Adek by his hand and led him to her room.

"We will eat in one hour," Ida yelled after them.

Lilly closed the door behind them and lay down on the bed while Adek sat on the armchair opposite her.

"Are you a friend of Lolek?" he asked.

"Yes, I am a friend of his. I've known him since childhood" she answered.

"Are you in love with him?" Adek asked bluntly.

"I do not think that I must answer such questions," Lilly responded as she raised her voice.

"I am sorry. You are right," he replied.

"Never mind. It's getting too complicated," she said with half a smile.

Lilly looked at Adek and realized that she liked him very much. He was an impressive looking young man, tall, smart and very witty. She concluded that eventually she would have to make a choice.

A Dream Realized

Lilly tried to get accepted in numerous acting and drama schools in Warsaw and Lodz but was rejected by all of them. They did not give a reason. The standard answer that she received was, "We are sorry, but you cannot join the classes this year."

During one of her visits to Krakow, Lilly met Anna Mandel, a friend and former classmate from her school days in Włoszczowa. Anna, a Jewish girl, had moved away years ago with her family to Krakow. Even though her parents were fluent in Polish, they nevertheless spoke only Yiddish to each other. Her grandparents on both sides were very religious and her parents continued in that tradition even after they got married. They sent Anna and her brother to religious schools.

However, while still in Włoszczowa, they came under the influence of the Enlightenment movement, and decided to send Anna and her brother to government schools. Nevertheless, they continued living a Jewish life; they went to synagogue regularly and spoke Yiddish at home. After moving to Krakow, though, Anna's father stopped wearing any type of head covering, stopped observing the Sabbath and only went to synagogue on Yom Kippur. For all intent and purposes, they became totally secular.

Anna found a job working in a dress shop, and that is where she met Lilly who happened to be passing by the shop.

At lunchtime, they went together to a little café where they each told about their lives. Lilly wanted to learn more about the Jewish cultural life of the city, but since Anna was not at all involved in the Jewish community she could not be of much help.

Anna had an acquaintance who worked at the *Cafe Szmatka*, which was a regular meeting place for Jewish writers, artists, musicians, actors and directors, and perhaps she could help Lilly with the information she was seeking. Lilly was ecstatic when Anna's friend gave her the address of the offices of the Jewish theatre in Krakow.

When she arrived at the offices of the theatre, she was greeted by the artistic director of the theatre, Dr. Kanfer.

"How can I be of help to such a lovely girl like you?" he said in his deep voice.

In a trembling voice Lilly replied, "I am sorry for intruding, but I want to study acting. I really love performing and have been doing so since a very young age. I performed in every school play."

"Where are you from?" he asked.

"I am from Włoszczowa," she answered, and quickly added, "And if I am accepted here, I will move to Krakow."

"Do you know how to speak Yiddish?" he once again asked.

"No," she replied. "Unfortunately, Yiddish was not spoken at home, so I do not speak or understand a word of Yiddish."

"Are you aware that our performances are geared for the Jewish public, and therefore they are mainly in Yiddish," he said to Lilly apologetically.

"You mean to tell me that I do not stand a chance of even getting a tryout audition to study acting?" she asked.

"If you insist I can give you a test. Even if you pass, that does not automatically guarantee acceptance. You will still have to learn Yiddish," the director said.

"No problem. I will learn," she replied decisively.

With enthusiasm in her voice, Lilly asked, "When can I be tested?"

"Now," he answered. "I am ready to test your skills right now. You come from a long way away so it would not be fair to have you come back another time."

Lilly felt as though she was going to pass out at any moment. She was not ready for this shock. She immediately recovered, and prepared herself mentally to play a role; entirely alert and concentrated.

"Think of a scenario and act it out for me," he said.

Lilly faced the director sitting in front of her and began.

My love, I have told you several times that I cannot meet you anymore.

My heart burns with my love for you and my love for you gets stronger every day. But what is love compared to the suffering we will bestow upon each other?

What is love worth if we have to move away from our families? What is love worth if our children will not be able to meet their grandparents? How are we able to live like this? Is this the life we are looking forward to?

True, I love you, but I also love someone else, whose background and future is similar to mine. Someone who my family will welcome and our families will rejoice with each other. Someone who is from my people.

Tears flowed from Lilly's eyes as she spoke so emotionally from the depths of her heart. She then wiped her eyes and smiled.

Have I convinced you with my frank words?

There was a brief pause, Dr. Kanfer took a deep breath and said, "Lilly Nachimson, go home, learn Yiddish and come back to me."

When she left the offices of the Jewish theatre, she ran into Anna who was waiting for her outside. They hugged each other and shouted shouts of joy. A passerby approached Lilly and shook her hand. "Congratulations," he said with a great smile on his face.

Lilly looked at the stranger and said, "But you do not even know me. Why are you so happy?"

"It does not matter. What is important is that you have reason to be happy. Very few people are happy in these difficult times," the stranger replied, as he bowed his head and moved on.

The entire trip back to Włoszczowa, Lilly's mind was occupied with images of herself acting onstage in the theatre. She was especially happy when Anna promised to ask her parents if, for a small fee, Lilly could live with them until she settled in and could find her own place.

Lilly ran all the way home from the bus station. When she entered the house, she first had to sit down and catch her breath before she could utter a single word. Izio, who was on the ground floor, came out to her and said, "Why are you so pale? Are you feeling okay? Should I bring you a glass of water?"

As soon as he got up to get a glass of water, Lilly jumped up and ran after him screaming, "I was accepted."

Upon hearing those words, Izio jumped for joy and together with Lilly ran upstairs to tell the rest of the family the good news.

At dinner, while they were all sitting around the table, the discussion began in earnest.

Wolf was the first to weigh in with his opinion. He was not at all pleased with his daughter leaving home and going off to live by herself.

"I see that your trip to Turkey set all the screws in your head into motion," he commented with obvious disapproval.

Ida was less stringent and wanted to know more details, especially about Anna whom she could not really remember.

Grandma Paulina was the most practical of all. "Who is going to teach you Yiddish?" she asked.

Lilly knew that Adek had been accepted by the medical school in Crakow and very much wanted to be near him. The news that she was conditionally accepted at the drama school in Crakow filled the heart great joy. She imagined herself and Adek as lovers running through the streets embracing and making love in a small rented rooftop apartment, intoxicated with love.

Reality set in when he told her that he would be living in the student

dormitory at the university. Nevertheless, she figured that at least they would be able to spend their free time together.

Lilly knew that her acceptance was conditional, and the condition was not easy. Her future now depended on how quickly she could learn to speak the Yiddish language with the correct pronunciation.

She searched in all of Włoszczowa for a teacher who could teach her Yiddish, but she was unsuccessful. She came across many people who could speak Yiddish, but none who were at a level to teach her. She needed a teacher who was fluent in literary Yiddish and knew the correct pronunciation.

To Lilly's surprise, it was Isaac, Adek's father who came to her rescue. He knew about her relationship with his son and therefore was willing to help.

His cousin Rebecca, an unmarried elderly woman who years ago had been a language teacher and was fluent in French, Italian, Polish, Russian and Yiddish, agreed to teach Lilly the Yiddish language.

"Adek, ich hub dich lieb", "Adek, I love you," was the first sentence in Yiddish that Lilly learnt. She wrote it on a piece of paper and hid it among her belongings. She wanted to give it to Adek the next time they met, but something inside her prevented her from giving it to him, as she was not certain that she was ready to reveal her true feelings to him.

Lilly met with her teacher Rebecca three times a week, for two hours

each time. Between lessons she studied diligently at home, usually reciting everything out loud. She spent many hours rehearsing the correct pronunciation of the words. She learned the phrases and words quickly, but had difficulty with the pronunciation. However, she did not give up; her future depended on it.

Whenever Lolek came to visit, he would spend his time playing cards with Izio and Paulina, while Lilly was locked in her room practicing and reciting Yiddish verses. When she took a break, she would come into the living room and sit down at the table and contemplate the "idyllic family." She wondered if Lolek had come to visit her or her grandmother. The thought gave her much pleasure and brought a smile to her face, until Lolek noticed and asked her why she was smiling. She then burst out laughing and ran back to her room.

The Situation Deteriorates

On the 12th of May 1935, there was an announcement on the radio that the Polish revolutionary and statesman General Jozef Pilsudski had died. Wolf decided to travel to Warsaw to attend the funeral of this great Polish leader. He decided to take izio and Lilly along with him; at the last minute Stanislaw also joined. Ida stayed home with Paulina.

Stanislaw drove them until Kielce and from there they took the train to Warsaw. Toward evening they arrived at the main train station in

Warsaw and from there they took the tram to the stop closest to Ogrodowa Street and walked the rest of the way to Moses' house. Moses and Cesia, who knew of their arrival, had prepared rooms for them.

Since it was already late in the evening, they immediately sat down to have dinner. After dinner, they moved into the spacious living room and sat by the fire, as the weather was rather cold.

A rather grim atmosphere reigned in the room as though a close relative had suddenly died. There was a feeling of shock and uncertainty with sadness and concern evident on the faces of the adults. Izio and Jerzy sat in silence although they did not fully comprehend the consequences that might soon befall them.

A few months later Wolf read an article that had been reprinted from the German newspaper. On the 15th of September the Reichstag had adopted new legislation known as the Nuremberg Laws for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, that basically stripped all German Jews of their citizenship.

This was the partial listing of the shocking and mind-boggling anti-Semitic laws.

Only a pure blooded German can be a German citizen.

Marriage between Germans and Jews is prohibited.

Relations outside marriage between Germans and Jews are prohibited.

Jews are prohibited from employing German nationals in their household.

It is prohibited for a Jew to be in the employment of any government or public offices.

Jews are prohibited from hoisting the Reich's or the national flag.

Wolf angrily threw the paper down. "What is happening here? Will this reach here too?" he thought to himself.

He had to talk to somebody in order to vent his anger. Due to his high blood pressure and the stroke that he had suffered, his doctors advised him not to get upset. However, Wolf did not always listen to the advice of his doctors.

He told Ida that he was going outside for some fresh air. In reality, he went out to smoke a cigarette, which was hidden in the glove compartment of his car. He put the pack in his pocket and decided to take a walk.

He crossed Rynek Square and lumbered slowly toward Rosa's house; he had not seen her for quite some time. Suddenly, out of nowhere a coach drawn by two horses appeared and nearly hit him. Wolf jumped to side of the road to get out of the way. Luckily, he was not injured. The coach stopped and his brother-in-law Stanislaw stepped out of the coach.

"Wolf, I almost hit you. Why don't you look where you are going," he scolded him.

"You're right," Wolf apologized. "I was thinking and did not pay attention."

Stanislaw stretched out his strong, muscular hand and helped Wolf climb into the coach.

"Where are you going?" Wolf asked.

"Come with me, it will do you good. A little fresh forest air never harmed anybody," Stanislaw answered.

"Did you hear what is happening in Germany?" Wolf asked, with anger still lingering in his voice.

"Yes, I heard the news. Nothing good will come out of the flood of Jewish immigrants coming into Poland from Germany. Anti-Semitism will only get worse," Stanislaw commented.

"Since the death of General Pilsudski last May, the *Endecja* party, the National Democracy Fascist Party, has gained strength and the anti-Jewish laws will sooner or later reach us too," Wolf said.

"So what do we do? Run away? To where? Nobody really wants us," Stanislaw replied.

"There are not many options. How, in my age and in my situation, can I contemplate leaving? What about my old mother? Where will I go? To Palestine? The British have restricted entry and are threatening to

expel all those that will enter illegally and the Arabs are menacing to kill all Jews. I will be leaving one trouble and going to an even bigger trouble," Wolf lamented.

"What about America? After all Ida and Eugenia have Uncle Lazer in Houston, Texas." Stanislaw asked.

"He is not really organized there yet. Besides we do not know the language. What will we live from?" Wolf replied.

"I do not know. One thing is for sure, here things are not good. We must think of a solution," Stanislaw said.

"Do you know what the problem is?" Wolf began, "The Jews are divided amongst themselves and there is no unity. Everybody is pulling in a different direction. Some Jews advocate blending in with the Poles, while others support an autonomous ethnic Jewish culture. Some are Zionists who support the idea of emigration to Palestine, while those who are more religious do not recognize Zionism at all. There is even a small minority of Jews who listen only to what their rabbi tells them and do not adhere to the laws of the land."

"Even those who want to blend in with the Poles and to be like them cannot do so. The Poles don't accept them. The Poles call them *Zyd*, and the Jews in turn call them *Goy*," Stanislaw responded.

"We will not solve the problems of the world, and certainly not the Jewish problem. Let's go home and warm up with a good glass of vodka," is how Wolf closed the conversation that was not leading

anywhere.

Six months had passed since Lilly had begun studying Yiddish. She was already able to conduct short conversations with her teacher Rebecca, and since she had an ear for music, she quickly learned to imitate the perfect accent of her teacher. Whenever she spoke Yiddish, she changed her facial expression to her "Yiddish face," which entailed wrinkling her forehead and displaying a serious and solemn expression. She would then break out in laughter and immediately calm down, as if somebody was watching her and warning her that it was forbidden to laugh while acting on stage, just as in the rehearsals.

One evening she sat down and wrote a letter to her aunt Isabella.

Dear Aunt,

The taste of the wonderful Turkish dishes still lingers in my mouth. I also vividly remember the long conversations we had and miss them.

I have great news to tell you. I am on my way to realizing my lifelong dream of becoming an actress. I was accepted at the acting school in Krakow on the condition that I learn Yiddish. It is now six months that I have been diligently and persistently working on learning the language. Rebecca, my teacher, is very encouraging and she thinks in the not-too-distant future I will be good enough to be able to recite long texts in Yiddish by heart.

Lolek courts me in his own way and at his own pace, but Adek is

quicker and more realistic. At this moment I have no time for either of them. I am devoting all my time and thoughts to my career, and I have absolutely no energy left in me for romance.

The family is doing just fine. My father is worried about the situation in Germany and what is happening there. There is a large influx of refugees coming from Germany to Poland with several families even coming to Włoszczowa.

Let's hope that the situation will change soon, but as Russia became communist so, Germany too is changing and becoming fascist. The anti-Jewish laws are the direct result of the strengthening of the Nazi Party and its anti-Semitic leader.

Too bad I cannot afford to come to visit you; perhaps in the future.

Regards from my mother and father.

Your admirer,

Lilly

1936

David was about to graduate from university.

Every once in a while he would meet Mina Halpern and ask her about Klara. He knew that Klara was madly in love with him, but since he had met Irena during his last visit to Włoszczowa, he could not stop thinking about her.

David had hoped to complete his studies and bring Irena to Warsaw, where he would rent a spacious apartment, start working and hopefully establish a family with his Polish love. It was these thoughts that constantly occupied David's mind.

It was at his last meeting with Mina in a small café at the corner of Nowolipki Street, that Mina told him the following shocking story.

One morning shortly after Klara's father left home to go to his office, which was not far from home, a group of Polish youths who were standing around waiting for a Jew to pass and harass him, blocked his way and began cursing him with cries of "dirty Jew." When he responded, they attacked him and began beating him with sticks on his head, while passersby were afraid to intervene. He lay on the street and bled to death while the youths spat and urinated on him. When they finally left, there was not much that could be done, as he was already dead.

The funeral was held secretly at night in the presence of three or four people. He was buried in a temporary grave in the Jewish cemetery in Praga.

Klara and her mother moved away to the city center. They tried to sell the house but were offered a tenth of its value. Instead, they decided to rent it out and with the proceeds they rented a small room in an old house in downtown Warsaw. Klara, who had graduated with a degree in philosophy, found a job as a clerk in an office.

David was shocked by the story, as he had known Klara's father quite well.

"I would really like to meet her. Do you have her address?" he asked.

"No, but I will get it for you," she answered.

"Ever since Pilsudski died the situation has been deteriorating, and anti-Semitism is rearing its ugly head," he said.

"Things will get worse," Mina said. "Kalman and I signed up with the *Kibbutz Hashomer Hatzair* in the Goclaw region, where we will be working on a farm and learning all about agriculture. When we are ready, we will make *aliyah* and emigrate to Palestine. The kibbutz will take care of everything including arranging our immigration certificates."

"That's impressive. Two dentists milking cows and uprooting carrots from the earth with their hands. Is that what you really want?" David asked her surprised.

"Palestine is the eternal home of the Jewish people. Poland was our home for generations, but now we are no longer welcome here. We are considered inferior citizens, the Poles hate us and want to get rid of us," Mina said.

"You must understand that we are Poles and the situation will change just as the world changes. Take the United States as an example. Once upon a time the blacks in America were slaves without rights, and now slavery has been abolished and now the blacks have the same rights as all other citizens," David said, trying to justify himself to Mina.

It was Mina's turn to refute David.

"David, do you know that in many cities in Poland there are pogroms against Jews and in Germany the Jews have been stripped of their citizenship. The Nazi party that is now in power is rousing their citizens to burn down Jewish owned businesses. Jews are escaping from Germany and scattering throughout Europe. Many of those who came to Poland have no place to live and are living in sub-standard living conditions.

America has closed its borders. What is there left for us to do? Sit and wait until the Polish government revokes our Polish citizenship and we are forced to leave? Or do we wait for them

to slaughter us all in the streets? It is better to leave now while we still can."

"Mina my dear," David said, "Let's stop this conversation right now. It gives me stomach aches."

"You have stomach aches because you are hungry. Come, let me prepare a bowl of hot *Krupnik* soup that I cooked yesterday. Kalman is in the apartment and will be very happy to see you," Mina said.

They left the café and headed towards Mina's apartment.

The next morning David did not go to the lectures at the university. Instead, he left his house and walked down *Krochmalna* Street, which was notorious for its prostitutes and pimps, most of them Jewish. He paused to light a cigarette, when a middle-aged woman wearing a torn skirt that revealed her legs and a tight blouse that exposed her breasts approached him. She grabbed his arm and said, "Come with me young man, let's go to my room." David pulled away from her, "I am not interested, I am in a hurry," he said.

The woman approached him again, clutched his arm and whispered into his ear, "If you do not come with me, my children will die of starvation. They have not eaten any food for two days already."

David took twenty zlotys from his pocket and gave it to the

woman."Take it and buy them something to eat," he said and continued on his way.He could hear her shouting from behind, "If you are ever in need, I am here."

He crossed *Zielona* Street and arrived at *Grzybowska* Street, a dimly lit street with two-story wooden houses lining both sides of the street. He looked for numbers on the houses but could not find any.

A curious tenant who was standing by his window shouted down to him, "Sir, are you looking for somebody?" David approached the man and answered, "Yes. I am looking for a mother and daughter that recently moved to this street. Her name is Klara."

The man came down into the street wearing pajamas that had seen better days.

"Did you say Klara? It is possible that I know her," he said in a confidential voice as if revealing a secret.

David took some coins from his pocket which the man immediately grabbed and put them into his pocket. "Follow me," he said.

After walking between some buildings, they entered a rear courtyard that had an external staircase leading to the second floor.

"Go upstairs," he said, pointing to the staircase.

David climbed the staircase and reached the stairwell, which was dark and suffocating from the smell of mildew. He looked forenames on the doors, but there were none. He decided to knock on one of the doors, and when there was no answer he knocked on the next door. When he heard sounds coming from the apartment, he knocked again more vigorously. This time the door swung open and in the doorway stood Klara.

"Oh my God! What are you doing here," she exclaimed.

David looked at her and barely recognized her, as she was totally neglected. She was wearing a faded blouse with missing buttons, her hair had thinned out, her face was pale and her eyes were sunken deep and expressionless.

"I heard from Mina what had happened to your father. I am really sorry," he said in a whisper."May I enter?"

She stepped aside and motioned with her hand for him to enter. The corridor that led to the only room in the apartment was dark. The living room had two beds; her mother was lying in one of them with a blanket covering her head. The only source of light was a small kerosene lamp. Next to the bed there was a tub of water. In one corner there was a pile of clothing and in the other there was a chair with some newspapers. The apartment was bare; no kitchen, no bathroom, no table, nothing.

David stood there in shock. He remembered the large house they had once owned with the exquisite furniture, the beautiful garden, the private law office and the private car. He recalled how the cheerful Klara studied at the university with her parents constantly doting over her.

"How did this happen? How did you get yourselves into this situation?" he asked.

"We sold everything in order to survive," she whispered in a broken voice. "We have nothing left. Mother has not eaten in several days. She does not respond when I call her and she is unable to talk due to her weakness. We simply want to die, but don't know how to do it."

"I will help you. Wait here and I will go and get some food for you to eat," he said as he ran out of the door.

Half an hour later he returned to the apartment with a package of basic necessities. He left the food on the chair, went over to Klara, hugged her tightly and said, "Do not despair or lose hope. I will return and help you. Feed your mother so that she gets back to herself."

David took all the money he had left out of his pocket and put it on the package of food. He left the apartment, leaving Klara standing speechless in the center of the room.

Are You Ready?

Lilly arranged an appointment with Dr. Kanfer, the artistic director of the Jewish Theater in Krakow. She asked her father to come along with her. Since Wolf did not drive long distances and Lilly did not drive at all, she asked Adek to drive them to Krakow. Adek agreed and came with his car to pick them up.

Wolf, who tried to get out of going said, "Why do you need me when you have such a nice young man along with you?"

"Papa, nobody can replace you," Lilly answered as she snuggled up to her father.

After such a response, there was no way that Wolf could get out of going along, so he got into the car. Wolf was very fond of Adek and was happy to see that a romantic relationship had begun between him and Lilly.

During the trip to Krakow, Lilly recited long monologues in Yiddish that she had learnt by heart. Wolf, who did not speak Yiddish, did not understand a single word. Adek, on the other hand, had a very good command of the Yiddish language and would at times laugh at her and correct her.

Dr. Kanfer was surprised with the "delegation," and quickly brought an extra chair to his office and asked his secretary bring hot tea for

the guests.

After a brief exchange of pleasantries, he turned to Lilly and in Yiddish asked her, "Are you ready?"

"I am very much ready," was her answer.

"Very good. So we can begin," Dr. Kanfer said.

"Exactly," Lilly replied with a wide smile on her face.

After her audition, Dr. Kanfer said to her, "Excellent job. Your accent still needs some improvement, but that will come with time. You will be an excellent actress. You've learned a difficult language very quickly. You have what it takes."

He then turned to Wolf and said, "Your job now is to arrange a place for Lilly to live here in Krakow. She cannot travel from Włoszczowa every day."

"I already have a place to live," Lilly said. "The parents of my friend Anna Mandel offered to rent me a room in their house."

"That being the case, I will wait for you to tell me that you are here, so that we can set a date for you to join the rest of the students who are already performing while studying," Dr. Kanfer stated and thus concluded the meeting.

As soon as they left the offices of the theatre, Lilly jumped on Adek and gave him a long tight hug. He was so surprised, that he stepped

back a few steps; that caused them both to fall to the ground, he on his back and she on top of him. Wolf helped the embarrassed Lilly to stand up, while red faced Adek stood up by himself. Nevertheless, the fall seemed to have given him great pleasure.

On their return trip, Lilly was so excited that she did not stop singing. Along the way, they stopped alongside a thick forest just north of Krakow. By the roadside the local women were selling wild mushrooms from baskets which they had woven from twigs that could be found in the forest.

When they arrived in Wloszczowa, Adek took them straight home. As they approached the house, Lilly moved closer to him and whispered into his ear, "This was the happiest day of my life for several reasons. First of all, I was accepted by the theater; you agreed to accompany me, and finally that you fell, with me on top of you. It felt so good, I did not want to get up. I wish us many more falls of this kind," she said and placed a kiss on his lips.

As they entered the house, Wolf said to Lilly, "I am very fond of Adek and am very happy with the relationship you have with him."

"I still have not yet decided if he will be the one," she lied to him.

Even though she had never received an answer to the first letter she had written to her Aunt Isabella in Istanbul, she wrote her another letter.

My dear aunt,

I hope all is well with you.

Although you have not answered my last letter, I am not upset with you as you see I am writing to you once again. The reason for my writing is that that I have good news that I would like to share with you.

I am letting you know that I was officially admitted to the acting school at the Jewish Theatre in Krakow. My father and Adek accompanied me there for my audition.

As far as Adek is concerned, I want to tell you that I am in love with him and that I feel that he is the man of my life. This December I will be celebrating my twenty first birthday and I think that that is the appropriate time to leave home. Adek has been accepted to medical school in Krakow and I really hope that we will be able to spend a lot of time together.

I went with my mother to the Okopowa cemetery in Warsaw and we placed flowers at your father's grave. It was the first time I had been there. The tombstone is amazing, with all the books he wrote engraved one on top of the other in white marble. At the base of the headstone there is a sculpture of folded hands with an open book and a broken pen on top of them.

He is in good company, buried along with other artists and writers. The famous author Anski, the poet and writer I.L. Peretz,

the actress Rachel Kaminska and Ludwig Zamenhof, who invented the Esperanto language, are all buried nearby.

Here is where I take leave of you and hope that will meet soon. I await your reply.

Yours, with a hug,

Lilly.

In early October 1936, David completed his studies in dentistry at the University of Warsaw and became a licensed dentist. After much hesitation, he decided to do his residency in the city Miedzewic at the practice of his relative Dr. Buhanek.

After seeing Klara's condition, he decided to give up his graduation celebrations and instead donate money to Klara and her mother to help them improve their situation. He collected one hundred and fifty zlotys from his family and went to see Klara to give her the money.

When he arrived at the building, he climbed the stairs and knocked on the door. He was shocked when a young girl opened the door.

In a worrisome tone he asked, "Who are you? What happened to the previous tenants"?

"I have lived here for about a week. The old lady who lived here died, apparently from starvation. When her daughter saw what had happened, she went out of her mind, began to scream and beat her

head against the wall until it bled. The neighbors summoned an ambulance that took her and her mother's body. That is about all that anybody knows."

David stood there for a while not knowing what to do. Just as he was about to give up and leave, a neighbor came and whispered to him, "I know where she is."

The man gave David the address of the *Zopiowka* Psychiatric Hospital in *Otwack*, and he immediately went there.

When he arrived at the hospital, he realized that he had hit a brick wall. According to the rules set down by the hospital director Dr. Jakob Frostig, nobody was permitted to enter the hospital to visit the patients.

In order to get information about Klara's condition, he was forced to bribe one of attendants to provide him with information. An hour later he returned and told David that Klara was in a catatonic state, tied to the bed, and was being administered electroshock therapy along with hydrotherapy. She had not responded positively to any treatment.

David turned and walked away. He accepted Klara's sentence and knew that she would never walk out of that place.

At the time David did not know that one of the senior doctors, Isaac Friedman, was accused of raping patients and was put on trial.

Not too many days later, Klara was found dead in her bed from poisoning. It seems she had stolen a bottle of a toxic substance and drunk its contents.

Lilly at Twenty-One

As every year, Lilly celebrated her birthday on December 25th, Christmas. This time it was her twenty-first birthday.

Lilly decided to celebrate her birthday by going to Warsaw. She loved the holiday decorations and Christmas trees with their twinkling multicolored lights. Oftenly she would stand next to the church and listen to the holiday hymns. She always wondered why the Jewish religion was such a sad one while the Catholic religion was so merry. Although she was Jewish, it did not stop her from loving and enjoying the holidays of others.

On Christmas morning she took the train from Kielce to Warsaw and decided that the first thing she will do when she arrives is to visit her friend Fela Goslawska whom she had not seen in several years, since she moved away from Włoszczowa.

Upon her arrival at the central station in Warsaw, she took the tram to *Kapitolna* Street, to the two story wood frame house where Fela and her parents lived. On the ground floor four families lived and on the second floor, Fela and her family lived along with three other families.

At the meeting tears flowed freely. Fela and Lilly were extremely close friends and kept in touch by letters. There were no secrets between them. They revealed their innermost secrets to each other. Although Uncle Moses and Aunt Cesia had invited Lilly to stay with them, nevertheless she preferred to stay with Fela.

The next morning, the two went out for a walk to enjoy the sights of the city, all decorated for Christmas. They walked through the covered market on *Switurajska* Street, the market of mixed ethnicities; Catholics, Jews, secular and orthodox. There were rows and rows of fruit and vegetable stands, as well as fish and poultry stands. Some stands sold kosher poultry which was ritually slaughtered by the rabbi on hand.

Fela stopped and watched how a chicken was being slaughtered. She saw how after it was slaughtered, the rabbi hung the chicken with its head down so all the blood would run out of it body

"That is awful. Why do they not cut the head of the chicken off?" Fela asked. Lilly shrugged her shoulders and said, "Actually, I have no idea nor does it matter to me, I do not eat poultry," she replied.

They continued to the specialty market located on *Marianplatz*. That was a where merchants sold homemade cheeses, jams, pickles and other delicacies.

"The smell of all these delicious foods is making me hungry," Fela said."Let's get something to eat."

They stopped to eat at a small restaurant not far from the market that served Polish and Jewish dishes. It was not fancy, with simple wooden chairs, several tables without tablecloths; a workmen's restaurant. They ordered goulash soup which was perfect for a cold December day along with a potato knish and finally a cup of hot tea.

After their meal, they decided to go see a movie at the Cinema Rena which was located on *Długa* Street corner *Klinskiego*. Right opposite the cinema was the *Mucha* Theatre and next to the theatre there was a synagogue.

Lilly was curious to see the inside of the theatre. She told the guard at the door that she is an actress at the Jewish Theatre in Krakow and wanted to see the interior of the theatre. The guard obliged and escorted them inside the theatre.

Thenr they paid 25 groszy for two tickets and entered the cinema to see the 1924 Polish comedy *Pat i Pataszo*. The movie was accompanied by a pianist who sat at the front of the stage and at the side of the screen someone ran the strip with the subtitles.

Every time a subtitle was not synchronized and appeared either too early or too late the people in the audience would whistle loudly in protest.

After the movie, they walked home and went straight to their bedroom to go to sleep. While donning their nightgowns, Fela suddenly turned to Lilly and asked, "Why do the Polish people hate the Jews so much?"

Lilly was taken aback by the question. After all, Fela was Catholic, but was free of anti-Semitism.

"Maybe it is because we have big noses?" Lilly said laughingly.

"I think it all stems from jealousy. The Polish people see that the Jews are successful in whatever they do," Fela replied.

"Perhaps it is because nineteen hundred and thirty six years ago we crucified your messiah?" Lilly suggested.

"Stop kidding around. I am being very serious. If all the Jews were like your family, the Jews would not be hated," Fela replied.

"Let me give you an example," Lilly began. "Imagine a century ago, a nomadic tribe came to France that only spoke their own language, incomprehensible to the French and they refused to learn French. In addition they did not enlist in the army; did not participate in any social events; did not go to church; dressed differently from the French; sported beards; did not send their children to government schools, kindergartens and universities; lived in poverty in small towns and villages. Furthermore, many of them dealt in unsavory professions, such as money speculating and loan sharking. Would you like them? "

"Lilly, you are repeating what has been printed in the newspapers hundreds of times. Not all of them are like that. There are many Jewish doctors, bankers, industrialists, university professors, actors,

writers and small business owners," Fela countered.

"Fela my dear, you are missing the point. The secular Jews in Poland, those that you speak of, don' even come close to ten percent of the total Jewish population. The rest are at odds one with the other. On every corner there is another Rabbi who holds the reins and makes the decisions for his sect and they prohibit all state laws," Lilly responded.

While they were talking, Fela's father entered the room. He turned to Lilly and said, "I understand that today is your birthday. Why are you cackling like chickens? Come let's have a drink to celebrate the occasion." He poured several glasses of vodka while Fela's mother appeared holding a cream pie with a candle stuck in the middle. "Sto lat, Sto lat" she began to sing as Fela and her father joined in. Lilly blew out the candle and then they all raised the glasses in her honor.

The Refugee From Berlin

It was an early spring day in 1937 when Father Dabrowski came to Wolf's house to visit him.

Although the priest considered Wolf a friend of his and had come to visit him several times, he only came if he had a good reason and not just to pay his respects.

Wolf, who was happy to see the priest, ushered him into the house. He immediately noticed that the priest's facial expression was serious and concerned. Wolf deliberately did not want to question the purpose of the visit, as he knew the priest to be a talker and that in few minutes he would open his mouth and tell all. It took four shots of vodka to loosen the priest's tongue, and indeed, when he began to speak he told it all.

"A refugee from Germany arrived at the church," the priest began, "and asked me if I could give him a room temporarily because he was emotionally shattered. Everything seemed very natural and I did not suspect anything, since many people turn to me for physical and emotional assistance especially in times of crisis. However, when he began telling me all that happened to him, I decided that I must share it with you as it is too much of a burden to bear alone. I came to ask you if you are willing to come to meet the man."

The man is a Christian of Jewish descent and therefore came to the

church to seek help. Nonetheless, he asked pleadingly that he wanted to meet with Jews who were willing to listen to his story and convey his message to high-level influential people to take preventive measures before there is more trouble."

Wolf agreed to meet the man. The priest asked that the meeting take place in the church, and Wolf did not refuse.

The next morning, Wolf left his house, crossed Rynek Square and walked a few hundred meters and entered the church. He walked into the personal office of the priest and found the man waiting for him. The man looked to be in his late thirties wearing clothes that were tattered and dirty. His countenance looked crushed from exhaustion and concern, and only his blue eyes seemed alert, darting around in their sockets with both suspicion and nervousness.

Wolf introduced himself to the man and sat down opposite him and began listening.

"My name is Gerd Baum and I am an architect from Berlin. I live ... I'm sorry, I lived in a lovely suburb of the city in a beautiful building with a doorman, in a two-bedroom apartment with my wife and my three-year-old daughter.

I actually hail from a family of prominent rabbis. My father got fed up with the Jewish religion, converted to Christianity, married a gentile German woman and together they had me and my younger sister, Inga.

My father, who was a rifleman in the army of Franz Josef, fought in World War I. When the war ended I was ten years old and today I am 32. As I already mentioned, I am married with a lovely three-year-old daughter.

Approximately one month ago, at four o'clock in the morning, I heard loud knocking at my door. I was afraid to go out, as I thought it might be thieves. I looked out of the balcony and saw a police car parked outside my building. When I opened the door, there were four armed men in brown uniforms standing at the door. I recognized the uniform right away; SA or storm troopers. They asked me politely if they could enter. When I obliged, they walked in to the kitchen and sat down around the table.

The leadert of the group removed a document from his pocket, which he refused to let me see, held it up in front of his face and in a loud voice read:

'Arrest warrant and a call for questioning of Gerd Baum, who is accused of marrying a German Christian woman, fathering a baby, all while he himself is a Jew.'

As soon as I heard the accusation, I immediately responded by telling them that I am a not a Jew and it must all be a misunderstanding. But the brown shirts surrounded me and called me an impostor, kike, traitor to his people, polluting the Aryan race.

They handcuffed me, pulled me downstairs, threw me into their car and took me to the police station.

They put me into an interrogation room where I sat alone for several hours. Due the tight handcuffs, the blood circulation in my hands was cut off, consequently, my fingers turned blue and insensible. As soon as the interrogator entered the room, he immediately began to abuse me and call me derogatory names. He accused me of pretending to be a German and plotting against the Nazi party. I was not beaten but I received treatment fit for the worst criminals."

Wolf looked at the man with a stern face and asked, "Why did your father convert to Christianity? Was there any special reason?"

The man bowed his head, lowered his voice and explained, "He wanted to be one hundred percent German and even married a German Christian woman. His family ostracized him and wanted to have no contact whatsoever with him or his children."

Wolf, nervously fidgeting in his uncomfortable chair, asked Gerd, "Did it help? The way I see it, it is impossible to hide or run away from your Jewish origins. Hitler will search and find your Jewish roots even after many generations."

"Indeed you are right. However, I would have never imagined though that an enlightened and progressive nation such as Germany with its rich culture, would pursue and persecute Jews because of their religion," Gerd answered.

"OK, continue," Wolf said."Let me hear how you got here."

All the while Father Dabrowski sat in the corner, pale-faced, without uttering a word.

"After several hours of suffering through profanities and intimidations, I was released. The interrogator advised me that for my own good, I should immediately leave Germany. I went home and told my wife all that had happened and all about the interrogation that I had endured. She could not believe what she heard. She was in shock when I told her that I had to leave Germany. She said that if we leave, we will lose everything; the apartment, furniture, clothing and the little money we had saved up in the bank.

We concluded that the best would be for me to leave until things calm down. I was sure that they would not harm my wife or daughter.

I went to see my sister Inga who lived nearby on the same street where her German husband has a small shop. I was glad to find my sister at home. I told her all that happened to me and she was frightened. She suggested that I temporarily move to another country, perhaps to Poland. She gave me what little money she had at home and told me not to procrastinate, as they may come after me again. She told me that since her husband had joined the Nazi party she felt safe.

I took a small suitcase and went through the apartment and put in some clothing and other important items that I may need on my journey. I also took some money to last me for a short while."

I parted from my wife and daughter with a tearful goodbye."

At this point, a nervous Wolf interrupted and said, "Perhaps you can shorten the story a bit. I do not have to hear all the minute and unimportant details."

A shocked Gerd looked at him and said, "I will continue by telling you what I saw on my trip here."

"Yes, tell what you saw. It is obvious that they did not kill you, otherwise you would not be sitting here," Wolf said without even cracking a smile.

"Every day new regulations against the Jews were announced which were intended to isolate them more and more from the rest of the population. We, who view ourselves as Germans, are suddenly forcibly classified as Jews and stripped of all rights."

"What is wrong with being a Jew? Are you a practicing Christian?" Wolf asked.

"Yes," Gerd answered. "I go to church every Sunday. Don't forget, I was born a Christian to a Christian mother."

"That being the case, I really do not understand why you ran away from Germany and left your family," Wolf replied.

"I fled, because I realized that a Jew remains Jew forever; even if he becomes a Christian or his grandfather or great-grandfather became Christian, he remains a Jew. Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against the Jewish religion, but I was born a Christian and want to

remain such."

At this point, he turned to Father Dabrowski and said, "Father, will you give me shelter for a while until I get myself organized?"

"You still haven't told me what you saw on your way to Poland," Wolf interrupted.

"I saw how the Jews were being persecuted. Initially they were stripped of their German citizenship and then they were hunted down like animals in the forest. The goal is to make Germany free of Jews. If the Jews do not escape and leave Germany now, their fate will be very bitter. There isn't a country in the world that is willing to take in the refugees from Germany. After I left home, I went to the United States embassy to get permission to emigrate there and was refused. The Canadian embassy told me to come back in a month, while Australia was not accepting Jewish refugees at all.

I saw the Germans throwing Jews out of moving trains. I saw them smashing the windows of Jewish businesses and how they forced upstanding Jewish citizens to sweep the streets with toothbrushes. All that I saw is just the tip of the iceberg of what is in store for them in the future, and it will eventually spread to every European country where Jews live."

Wolf sat and listened with a serious face to the entire narrative. He refused to believe all that Gerd had told him. One thing he knew for sure, that the refugee was a coward who had abandoned his religion and people and now his family and his homeland.

Love and Hate

Adek began his studies in Krakow.

In early May Lilly was notified that her classes at the acting school in Krakow were about to start. She sometimes saw Lolek while walking through Rynek Park, but he never came over to her. Whenever he noticed her, he turned around and walked the other way. Lily knew that he was still in love with her, and she wanted to tell him how sorry she was, but she had given her heart to somebody else. She had loved Lolek, but it was a different kind of love. She remembered the good old days they spent together when they were young, the love notes he would send to her and his fleeting glances while she read Jerzy a story. She decided that before she left for Krakow she would meet him and explain everything to him.

One evening, while the family was eating dinner, they heard smashing sounds coming from the guest room. Wolf jumped up, with

Jerzy right behind him, and ran into the guest room. On the floor they found a large rock lying among the broken glass.

Visibly shaken by the incident, Wolf said, "Somebody could have really gotten hurt." Jerzy quickly ran out of the house to see if he could catch the perpetrator, but he came back a few minutes later and reported that the streets were empty.

Lilly knew that Lolek was jealous of her, but she could not believe he was capable of such a thing. She suppressed her thoughts and did not say anything to the worried family. Lolek's name was not mentioned among the names of suspects, and after a few days it was decided not to do anything about the incident and to continue with their daily activities.

Lilly nevertheless decided to meet with Lolek before moving to Krakow. When she found nobody at home, she decided to go to the pharmacy.

When she entered the pharmacy she saw Lolek's father Branislaw and said, "Hello Mr. Bitoft."

"Wow, Lilly, how you have grown. It's been a long time since I last saw you," he replied as he approached her and shook her hand.

"I actually wanted to say goodbye Lolek, since I am moving to Krakow to study acting at the theatre," she said.

"Wow, you haven't changed a bit. You are the same funny girl you

always were. I remember when, as a little girl, you used to make funny faces at me when you came into the pharmacy with your mother." He then added, "Lolek went to Warsaw and did not say when he will return. It is already a year that he does not live at home with us."

"How long has he been in Warsaw," she asked, hoping the answer would give her an insight into her suspicion about the stone.

"He came by yesterday and told me about the trip. Surely you know that we do not have a very good relationship," Branislaw Bitoft told her.

Lilly left the pharmacy with her heart beating rapidly, barely saying goodbye. She was now convinced that "that was the manner" Lolek chose to part with her.

On one of his many trips to Warsaw, Stanislaw met Lolek at the train station in Kielce. They knew each other quite well, as Stanislaw had once even offered Lolek a job and had been prepared to teach him forestry. Lolek thought it was not a profession suitable for him and abandoned the idea. Since then they had met several times at Lilly's house.

Lolek tried to evade him, but Stanislaw approached him and tapped him on the shoulder. When Lolek turned around and greeted him with a handshake, Stanislaw asked, "Where are you going?"

"To Warsaw," Lolek answered.

"So am I," Stanislaw said. "Let's not be bored on the trip and try to find seats next to each other on the train and keep each other company," Stanislaw suggested.

It turned out that they were the only two passengers in the carriage. After settling down in their seats, Stanislaw took out the newspaper that he had bought at the station and began reading it. Lolek sat in silence with his head slumped, making it obvious that he really did not want to be there.

"What do you do in Warsaw?" Stanislaw suddenly asked.

Without so much as even raising his head, Lolek answered, "Business."

Stanislaw did not want to delve any deeper, so he changed the subject.

"Do you still meet with Lilly?" he asked innocently, oblivious to the relationship between Adek and Lilly.

"No, we have absolutely no contact," he replied.

"What a pity, you were friends since childhood. When she grew up, it seemed that the relationship was getting more serious," he said.

Lolek raised his head and looked directly into Stanislaw's eyes, and in an angry loud voice said, "You are acting as if you don't know that she is in love with somebody else."

"No, in all honesty, I do not know what you are talking about," he

replied.

"She is going out with Adek who recently moved to Krakow. She is readying herself to move there and probably move in with him," Lolek answered.

"I did not know. Honestly, I did not know a thing. Are you referring to Adek Zaidenbaum?" he asked.

"Yes, the Adek from the lumber business; the wealthy Jewish family. Why should she want me? Lolek responded.

"You are telling me a lot of news. I am her uncle, and know nothing," Stanislaw said. He then added, "It's too bad. I thought the two of you were in love. After all, you grew up together and you constantly played with Jerzy as a baby. You were part of the family. Is it really over? What a shame."

With emotion evident in his voice, Lolek said, "Perhaps I was not a courageous enough about opening my heart to her."

"Do you still love her?" Stanislaw asked.

"Love is not a strong enough word to characterize what is taking place inside of me. I am ready to give my life for her. Not a minute passes that I do not think about her. At night I am awake for long hours thinking of her. And you are asking me if I still love her?" As he spoke, tears were in his eyes and his face turned red.

"How can I help?" Stanislaw asked. "You're a good and sincere young man and I want to help. I know that Lilly was quite fond of you, however I do not know how she feels now. Would you like me to find out?" he asked.

"I very much doubt if there is anything you can do to make her change her mind. But I am willing to let you try. At least then I will know for certain that all is lost for me," Lolek answered while wiping

his eyes.

Stanislaw gave Lolek a fatherly hug. "I will try my best," he promised. Adam Wolowelski had received his degree as a medical doctor from the university in Modena Italy, and was about to return to Poland. With a broken heart, he bid his beloved Italian girlfriend Rosie good-bye, as her parents refused to let her go with him to Poland. Although he knew that it would never happen, he nevertheless promised her that one day he would return. His career as a doctor was equally as important to him as his love life. Moreover, Fascist Italy forbade intermarriage between Jews and Italians, or foreigners with Italian Catholics. Jewish professors were dismissed from universities and the expulsion of Jews had begun. Adam felt as if the ground was burning under his feet, and hastily left by train for Poland.

When Adam reached Warsaw, he found a totally different atmosphere than the one he knew. Anti-Semitism was rampant and there were pogroms against Jews in many areas throughout Poland. Jews in Krakow organized themselves to fight against those who tried to harm them.

Adam decided that the most suitable place for him to work was in Russia, his previous homeland. He also knew from his correspondence with his cousin David, who lived in Miedzyrzec, that the hospital in Brest-Litovsk was in need of doctors. The hospital management was very interested in young doctors who had graduated from universities in more developed countries, where medicine was on a higher level than in Poland or Russia.

When he realized that the distance from Miedzyrzec to Brest-Litovsk was only an hour's drive, he decided to approach the hospital in Brest-Litovsk and ask for a job. This way he could live near David.

He contacted the city hospital of Brest-Litovsk and asked if they were in need of a doctor.

A few days later he received the news that he would be accepted as an intern in the surgical department at the hospital. He was so ecstatic, that he began jumping and screaming like a madman; a number of neighbors came out to see what terrible tragedy had occurred. Cesia had to go out and explain to them that they were shouts of joy. The neighbors were not convinced, until Adam came out to reassure them and calm them down.

On September 8th, 1938, the Dr. Adam Wolowelski left Warsaw with two full suitcases, in the Fiat Cabriolet that his father had bought him. Shortly thereafter Moses called Wolf and summed up the situation in one sentence.

"My dear Wolf," he began, "Adam left for Brest, David left for Miedzyrzec and Lilly left for Krakow, maybe it's time for us to leave too?"

Wolf had absolutely no intention of leaving his homeland. He had gone through some rough times and was not looking for more adventure. Between the pension that he received and the bit of income from work that he did for some private customers he was able to live comfortably. He had begun playing tennis at the *Betar Zionist club*, where he would discuss and debate the subject of emigration to Palestine with some of the activists who were there. They debated him, despite the fact that they knew that they would never convince him to move to Palestine.

As a result of the *Anschluss*, the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, the Austrian government began expelling Jews from Austria. The non-citizens were expelled immediately and those

citizens who received exit permits were forced to pay heavy taxes before leaving. All those who chose to stay behind endured great humiliation. Professors, writers and people of high social status were given toothbrushes and told to clean the streets. The famous composer and conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic, Julius Wolfson, who was Lilly's greatuncle succeeded to leave Vienna with his family, and arrived in Poland.

The first night in Poland, Julius stayed at Wolf's house so that he could visit with his sister and nephew before going to Warsaw where he owned an apartment.

The following afternoon, Julius presented himself at the US Embassy with documents attesting to the fact that he was an accomplished conductor and composer who had very friendly relations with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Philadelphia. He produced a letter in which they notified him that they were looking for a conductor and would he consider taking the job. He was told to wait a few weeks to get a response.

As if by miracle, two weeks later he received a visa to emigrate to the United States. He wasted no time, dropped everything, packed a few suitcases, abandoned his apartment and with his wife and two sons left by train for the Netherlands where he boarded a ship that sailed to New York to begin his new life.

The news that began filtering into Poland from Germany was most worrisome. Wolf sat for hours listening to the radio, listening as daily rumors surfaced, each worse than the day before. The report from the morning of October 5, 1938, was that the citizenship of all German Jews had been revoked, and that their identity cards had to be stamped with the letter "J" identifying them as Jews. Also, for

quick and easy identification purposes, the males were given the name Israel and females the name Sarah. The report ended with the news that the German government had begun confiscating Jewish homes and businesses.

Wolf called Moses and asked his opinion of the situation. Moses, being a calm, cool and collected businessman, showed no signs of great worry. He calmed Wolf down by saying that the Jewish population in Poland was barely ten percent of the total population and that they would not concern themselves with the Jews. Besides, Poland was not Germany and the Polish government was not a fascist government. However, he added that it was important to constantly be on the alert and see in which direction the wind was blowing.

In late October it seemed that the winds of evil began blowing in the direction of Poland. On October 27th, the Nazis began an en masse deportation of all Jews living in Germany with Polish citizenship. The SS carried out the expulsion order with zealousness and great cruelty. Entire families were forcibly removed from their homes, including children, the elderly and the sick. They were expelled and abandoned at a border town between Poland and Germany, called Zbaszyn.

In this town that lay in ruins, the Jews were forced to find shelter. On one side the Poles refused to let them re-enter their country, and on the other side the Germans pushed and beat them at gunpoint. Since neither country would let them in, they were forced to spend the cold and snowy winter in the abandoned stables that dotted the town. They sustained themselves with the bit of help that they received from the locals and from the "Joint" (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee). Many of them died from the cold and hunger, while there were many who committed suicide.

The Polish and German governments held lengthy deliberations about what to do with the Jews who had been expelled. Poland claimed that these people had lost their Polish citizenship, while the Germans argued that they were not German citizens at all and therefore could not continue to live on German soil. Finally, after much pressure from Germany, Poland acquiesced and allowed those Jews back into Poland. Wolf was very upset by these events and urgently asked Stanislaw to come to see him. He was also in continuous contact with his family in Warsaw and Lodz. Everybody was worried.

"Staszek, What do we do? Should I summon David and Lilly to come home?" Wolf asked worriedly.

At this point in the conversation Ida intervened and said, "Do not scare them. David is working and Lilly is rehearsing for her opening performance."

"What do we do if the government starts imposing sanctions against the Jews here in Poland"? Stanislaw asked.

"I do not think that that will be the situation here. The Poles do not behave like those Nazis. Poland is not like Germany. Besides, where would you go?" Wolf asked as looked at them."If the situation really deteriorates, we will have no choice but to leave. Eugenia is still not convinced, but I'm sure that with enough coaxing I will convince her. We will not stay here and wait for them to treat us like mad dogs,"

Stanislaw said angrily. Paulina, who had been silent until then, joined the conversation."My brother Julius was right when he left Poland for the United States. You are all a bunch of fools. You should immediately leave this accursed country that does not accept us as their citizens. Every negative occurrence is blamed on the Jews. You

have no future in this country," she said emotionally.

"What do you mean 'you', and what about you?" Wolf asked his mother.

"I am already old. What could possibly happen to me?" she replied with a half smile.

"What will happen to Jerzy, David and Lilly?" Ida asked with obvious concern.

"Everything will be fine; just stop worrying so much. We have lived through difficult times before and have overcome them, so we will this time," Wolf said. Everybody present doubted if he believed his own words.

"Wolf, I wanted to tell you something else. On my last trip to Warsaw, I met Lolek on the train and we sat together. He confessed to me about his great love for Lilly. He lives with the hope that she will one day be his, and asked me to talk to her," Stanislaw said to Wolf and Ida, who sat stone-faced in front of him.

"Don't you dare even tell her that you met him. I still suspect that the stone that was thrown through our window was somehow connected with that scoundrel. I have no proof, but that is my feeling," Wolf said to Stanislaw.

War on the Horizon

Several days later, Wolf received a frantic phone call from Stefania. In a tearful voice she told him that street thugs had attacked her elderly father, the dentist Ilia Freidberg, and he was in a hospital in Warsaw, unconscious. Wolf was stunned when he heard the news and promised her that he would make every effort to arrive the next day together with Ida.

While he was making arrangements for his trip to Warsaw, Stefania once again called and told him that he did not have to rush to come as Ilia had died. She would let him know of the funeral arrangements as soon as things were finalized.

The funeral was set for two days hence.

The family came from all over Poland. David came together with Adam, Moses came with his wife Cesia; they were accompanied by their son Jerzy, Wolf and Ida came with Lily and Izio, Aunt Bertha came with Stanislaw, and Eugenia and Dr. Herman and his family drove all the way from Lodz.

Mila, Stefania and her husband Cesari, all dressed in black, stood at the entrance to the Jewish cemetery and greeted the mourners. This was the same cemetery where Ilia's father, the writer Abraham Shalom Friedberg, was buried. The body was transported on a carriage that was pushed by the members of the burial society. Stefania and Mila, who wished their father to have a traditional Jewish burial, had requested that an officiating rabbi be present.

The carriage stopped alongside the open grave and the mourners filed past the body which was wrapped in a white shroud and covered with a *talit*, a prayer shawl. The rabbi read a few chapters of psalms aloud and proceeded to tear the clothes of Ilia's two daughters. After the body was placed into the grave, every man threw a shovelful of earth on the corpse. When the grave was filled and the body covered, the rabbi chanted the prayer *Keil Moleh Rachamin* (prayer for a deceased). Everybody stood still with their heads bowed, while the cries of Stefania and Mila echoed over the heads of everyone.

The rabbi approached Cesari and told him that since the girls could not recite the *Kaddish*, the mourner's prayer, he should say it in their stead. Cesari apologized and told the rabbi that he was not *halachically* Jewish and therefore could not recite it. The rabbi then asked David to recite it, but he too refused, explaining that he didn't know how to pronounce the Aramaic words. Finally the rabbi himself recited the *Kaddish* and all answered Amen.

By mid-November 1938, the first reports of the horrific *Kristallnacht* pogrom against the Jews of Germany reached Poland. During the riots, 91 Jews were killed and nearly all the synagogues, 1700 of them, were set ablaze. Jewish shops were looted and burnt, while tens of thousands of Jews were taken by force and sent to concentration camps. The Jewish communities were required to pay compensation for the damage caused by the pogrom.

People began to realize that the black clouds hovering over the skies of Germany were slowly making their way over to Poland.

Stanislaw was the first to understand that the situation would gradually get worse and decided to do something drastic. The next morning he drove quickly to Warsaw and began searching for a vacant apartment. He

did not have to look for long before he found a ground-floor apartment in a small building in the outskirts of the city near a church. It was a strictly Catholic neighborhood; no Jews lived there.

The landlady, a middle-aged single woman, dressed in black with a gray scarf covering her head, stared at the young good-looking man standing in front of her.

"I am Stanislaw Czajkowski from Lodz. I recently got a job here in Warsaw and I am looking for an apartment for myself and my sick wife."

The woman invited him to sit down and offered him a cup of hot tea. They sat and talked for about an hour. The woman was very impressed with Stanislaw, especially when he told her that it was important to him that the church was so close to home.

He told her, "When I was growing up, my parents' house was adjacent to a church. If I did not hear the church bells ringing every hour, I could not fall asleep."

After each sentence he said "*Chwala Bogu*," praise the Lord, and either crossed himself or placed the palm of his hand on his heart. The woman was "convinced" that Stanislaw was a good and trustworthy person, so she agreed to rent the apartment to him. Stanislaw inspected the apartment and found everything to be in good order. Although the furniture was of poor quality, everything was there; nothing was missing. They agreed on a price, drew up a simple contract on a piece of paper and both signed it. Stanislaw paid her a year's rent up front and she gave him the keys.

In large letters on a sheet of paper he wrote the name Stanislaw Czajkowski and hung it on the front door. He put the keys in his pocket, but not before he hung a small wooden cross on the door.

He now had to make a minor change on his identity card with regards to

the spelling of his name. He had to replace the letter "S" at the beginning of his family name with the letter "C" to make it more Polish and Christian sounding.

When he got home to Włoszczowa, Stanisław did not tell anybody what he had done, not even his wife. The only one he told was his brother Juziek and advised him to do the same.

In the meantime, Wolf was deliberating whether to make Lilly come back to Włoszczowa or to let her stay in Cracow. He knew that she would never forgive him if she had to stop her acting studies because of him. He decided to consult with his friend Isaac Zaidenbaum, father of Adek and Simon.

Isaac was very concerned with what was going on. The economic situation was worsening as people were unemployed and had no money. He had stopped all production and was just concentrating on selling whatever inventory he had.

"I want to send Adek and Simon to Palestine," he told Wolf almost in a whisper.

Wolf knew that Isaac was a man of means, a very rich man, and if he was thinking in that direction, perhaps he should be thinking the same way.

"What is so great about Palestine that you choose to send them there," Wolf inquired.

"There is nothing really there. It is under British rule, Arabs attack Jews, the climate is harsh, malaria and typhoid are rampant and who knows what else. But you know, my good friend Wolf, it is where the hope of the Jewish people lies; it is your country, your homeland and nobody there will call you a "dirty Jew." If the British do not grant independence to the state that will be established, the Jews will fight them and send them back to England in coffins. Jewish leadership has been organizing and

young people are learning how to use weapons, the training taking place in kibbutzim.

Open your eyes, Wolf, there is a new reality out there. *The Balfour Declaration* has given new hope to the Jewish people. The anti-Semitic Polish government wants to rid Poland of the Jews, so a delegation traveled to the island of Madagascar to establish a Jewish state there. There was even talk about going to Africa. Who needs these places when we have Palestine."

When Isaac finished talking, he took a deep breath and his eyes burnt with enthusiasm.

"Tell me, what is so bad with America or Argentina?" Wolf asked.

"Nothing is bad, but the doors of all countries are closed to Jewish refugees," Isaac answered, staring Wolf straight in the eyes.

"I am sure that Adek is going to want to take Lilly with him. Be prepared for her to come to tell you the news."

"Lilly is not going any place, not with Adek and not without him. I am very pleased that they are together, but she is not going with him." Wolf said firmly.

Wolf returned home all excited and agitated from his conversation with Isaac. He was in need of immediate bed rest because he felt his blood pressure had risen. Ida placed some leeches around his neck and sat next to him until he fell asleep.

For many years, out of the twelve representatives on the Włoszczowa City Council, six were Jewish. In the local elections that took place at the end of 1938, only two Jewish representatives were elected. This was a direct response of the opposition of the Christian population against the Jews of Włoszczowa.

In the days following the elections an economic boycott of Jewish shops

and businesses began, which lead to the worsening of the economic situation for them.

One day a new reality set in. It was announced that municipal offices were prohibited from purchasing supplies or any type of products from Jewish establishments. Wolf immediately ordered Ida that from then on, she was to purchase products only from Jewish merchants.

Wolf decided that it was too dangerous to leave Lilly in Cracow, and therefore decided to take her home. He called the theatre's offices to advise them of his decision. The phone rang and rang for a long time, but there was no response. There was still no response when he tried again several hours later. He called Isaac and asked him if he had heard from his son Adek recently. When Isaac informed him that he had not, Wolf decided he could wait no longer and set out for Cracow. He asked Simon, Adek's brother, to join him on the trip.

Since they were both very tense, little was said the entire trip. Because there had recently been a tremendous increase in hostile activities against the Jews, Simon had an iron bar with nails attached to it on him, that he could use in case of an attack.

As they approached Cracow, traffic slowed to a crawl due to a multi-vehicle accident. Several people were standing by the roadside waving their hands, asking passing cars to stop and help. Wolf stepped on the accelerator and went around them as their cries of rage could be heard. He kept on driving until they reached the city. They decided to first go to the theater's offices and see if Lilly was there. As they pulled up alongside the building, they looked inside and could see shattered windows, doors ripped off the hinges and broken furniture everywhere. Wolf did not even get out of the car and just continued to the next address on his list, that of the home of Lilly's friend, Anna Mandel.

Wolf noticed that the streets were deserted. Cafés were empty and hardly any cars were on the road. There was an atmosphere of tension in the air, as people walked quickly, constantly looking around and behind them. Many walked holding rolled-up newspapers in their hands, which clearly concealed a stick for protection.

As they approached the Jewish quarter, the *Kazimierz* district, they found people, mostly young in the streets. Wolf stopped his car and asked one of the youngsters for directions to the address he was looking for. It turned out that they were very close as it was the next street. When he found the address, Wolf parked the car and they both entered the building.

"Papa, what are you doing here?" Lilly shouted as she opened the door and saw Wolf standing there. She hugged her father and Simon, who was standing right behind him.

"Please come in, I am alone at home. Anna and her parents went to a relative who lives in a small village outside the city. They are afraid of getting hurt, especially after nearly every wall in the city was painted with the words "Death to the Jews." The offices of the theater was damaged and it is temporarily closed" Lilly reported.

"Lilly, how is Adek?" Simon asked.

"He is doing just fine. He is continuing his studies at the university. He has a Polish Catholic friend who watches over him that nobody harms him. Not all Poles are Jew haters," she said.

"We came to take you back home with us," Wolf said.

Lilly did not resist her father's proposition. She actually seemed quite frightened by everything taking place around her. Simon's presence gave her a bit of confidence.

When they arrived at his apartment, Adek was there, studying. Simon

went upstairs to try to persuade him to return home with them, but Adek resisted and said that he had upcoming exams and if he missed them, his whole year of studying would have been for naught. Simon warned him that the situation would only worsen and he would be all alone with nobody around to defend him. When Simon told him about the hateful graffiti painted on the walls of the city, Adek turned pale and immediately decided to return home with them.

The trip home went smoothly. Wolf drove slowly and was forced to stop several times to rest and to give the noisy, smoking engine a chance to rest.

By early evening they arrived in Włoszczowa. When Wolf dropped the two brothers at their father's business, Isaac came out to them and shouted "*Chwala Bogu*," thank the Lord, and embraced his sons with tears in his eyes.

Lilly hugged Adek tightly, placed her head on his shoulder and said pleadingly, "My darling, please come to visit me tomorrow."

"I promise," he said as they took leave of each other.

All the newspaper headlines read the same thing, "War on the Horizon." However, it was unclear whether the war would be initiated by the Russians or by the Germans. The main topic of discussion among the people was "when will it start" as everyone was sure that it would start.

The Jewish Spark

Wolf spoke to Moses nearly every single day. Moses tried to calm him by stressing that in the previous war, nothing had happened to the Jews living in Austrian or Germany. Moses was more scared of the Russians, as he had already lived through one revolution and barely got out alive.

Wolf called David, who lived near the Russian border, to ask him about the situation there. David told him that Dr. Buhanek had begun to let him treat patients at his dental clinic and had even begun teaching him new techniques. He sounded very pleased and content. He reported that all was quiet and calm and he would at times go to visit Adam at the hospital in Brest-Litovsk.

"All that is left for us to do, is to sit on our backsides and wait for things to happen," Wolf said to Ida, who seemed worried about the future.

Her neighbor and best friend, Zosia, would come to visit nearly every day at about five o'clock in the afternoon. They would drink tea and nibble on yeast cakes that Zosia had baked and brought along with her.

"My darling Zosia, what will be? What do you hear on the street? What are people saying?" Ida asked curiously.

"Oh, Ida, I cannot and do not want to repeat what I hear on the street. I do not understand all this hate. I cannot fathom why they hate the Jews. Who is fueling this fire that is spreading so rapidly?" Zosia replied.

"Have you heard from your daughter Ewa lately?" Ida asked, trying to change the subject from a topic that made Zosia very uncomfortable.

"Ewa left the house and went to live with some guy whom she met. I have no idea where she met him. All I know is that he is a heavy drinker and does not work at all. I saw signs of physical abuse on her body, but she denies that he beats her. Everything about him is negative. He is one big zero.

While still in school, she met this wonderful young man with whom she fell in love. One day, he just disappeared. He did not leave a letter explaining his actions. Nothing, as if the earth had swallowed him up. Immediately thereafter, the bully Wojtek came on the scene, and they have been together ever since. "

Zosia took a white handkerchief out of her pocket and wiped her tears.

"The holidays are approaching and considering that we are in mid-December the temperature is still rather mild and pleasant," Ida said.

She then added, "Perhaps you want to come to us for the holidays, especially as you are alone this year."

"Oh, Ida, my best friend, I am so grateful to you. I will let you know if I decide to join you. Sometimes I just like to be at home alone, seclude myself and forget, even for an hour everything that is happening around

us; the inexplicable hatred and hostile behavior. After all, were we not all created in the same way? And religion, instead of bringing us all closer, is moving us farther away from each other and creating tremendous hatred. Why does it have to be this way?"

The eighteenth of December was the eve of Chanukah, the Festival of Lights. That night, the first of the Chanukah candles would be lit. Wolf decided that for the first time in his life he was going to celebrate a traditional Jewish holiday. He invited Isaac Zaidenbaum and his two sons, Adek and Simon, to come over and celebrate with his family. He also invited Stanislaw and Eugenia and her sister Roza, while Ida invited Zosia.

During the afternoon, Wolf prepared the Chanukah menorah exactly as Isaac had instructed him. Ida prepared traditional Chanukah foods; potato pancakes, known as *latkes*, and deep-fried donuts.

When darkness fell, everyone crowded into the living room and looked at the table where the menorah with its two candles was waiting; one to mark the first day of the eight days of Chanukah while the other one, known as the *shamash*, was an supporting candle used to light the rest of the candles.

Isaac held the *shamash* candle and began to recite the first blessing. "Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to light the candle of Chanukah," He then recited the next blessing."Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days at this time."

Finally he recited the last blessing." Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe, Who has sustained us and provided for us and helped us reach this time."

All answered, Amen, and he lit the candle.

Everybody sat down around the table and Ida served hot potato pancakes and her homemade donuts filled with jelly. Isaac and his two sons began to sing the traditional Chanukah song, *Maoz Tzur*, while everybody either sang or hummed along with them.

"Why is *Chanukah* celebrated," Zosia asked Ida.

Adek, who immediately noticed Ida's embarrassment for not knowing the answer, came to her rescue and answered Zosia.

"In 168 B.C.E. the First Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Greeks and eventually rebuilt by the *Maccabees*. When they wanted to light the menorah, they found only a small jug of pure, untainted olive oil that was enough to burn for one day. They needed enough oil to last eight days, for that is how long it takes to press new olive oil. Miraculously the small jug of oil lasted for eight days, and to commemorate that miracle we celebrate Chanukah for eight days."

"How beautiful," Zosia commented. "In Christianity we also have miracles. It seems that every religion has its miracles," Zosia continued while eating a hot potato pancake.

"I am so embarrassed by how little I know about Judaism," Stanislaw said as Eugenia nodded her head in agreement.

"We wanted to be like the Polish, and look where it got us. They are not willing to recognize us as Poles. Ever since they began their economic boycott of us, it is impossible to make a living. They are killing us. Pretty soon they will force us to leave our homeland," Wolf said in an angry tone mixed with sadness.

"Enough already," Stanislaw said. "Stop the whining and complaining. Now it's time to celebrate" And to Ida "Get your guitar out and start playing something for us."

Ida took her twelve-string double guitar out of the case, turned to Isaac and said, "Would you like to sing once again the Chanukah song that you sang before?"

Isaac began singing, as Ida began strumming with her thin fingers, trying to catch the rhythm of the music. After Isaac had repeated the melody several times, Ida began accompanying him, with uncanny accuracy. When he stopped singing, she continued playing by herself for several minutes, while everyone hummed the tune, that was etched in their minds, along with her.

One day a letter from Istanbul arrived.

My dear Lilly,

I am really sorry that I have not written to you earlier, but my health is not what it used to be. I am growing weaker by the day and it is becoming more and more difficult for me to go out for long walks.

Rumors of the atrocities that are taking place in Germany have reached us here in Istanbul, and I am very concerned that it will affect the relationship and treatment of the Jews in Poland.

How are you getting along with your acting lessons? I was really excited to hear that you have chosen that career. Perhaps one day you will act in one of the plays that I have written. Wouldn't that be nice?

How are your parents and brothers? Has David already finished his studies? How is your dachshund, Balbina, the one you spoke so fondly of, doing?

This letter contains many questions and very little about myself. That is because I do not have much to tell. My life is quiet, and aside from my writing and correspondence, my days are long and nights are endless.

What a great time I had when you were here; at least the sweet memories

remain in my heart.

Embracing you with great affection,

Berta

Lilly then placed the letter on the table, while Grandma Pauline sat in her armchair and listened as Lilly read her the letter aloud.

"What should I write to her? That my dream was shattered, because the school was closed due to the pogroms carried out by Jew-haters? Should I write that my parents are afraid to leave the house? That they are boycotting Jewish businesses? After all she had begged to me to stay with her and said that Turkey welcomes Jews from Europe."

Paulina looked sadly at her favorite granddaughter and said "Lillinka, you are still young, times will change and even this evil will pass. We have experienced difficult times in the past."

Lilly placed Balbina on Paulina's lap and said, "You have it the best, because nobody hates you." The dog bowed its head as if it understood what was being said.

Adek came to visit Lilly and her family every day, spending many hours there. Wolf tried to teach him the game of bridge, but Adek was not particularly interested. All he wanted was to be in the company of his beloved Lilly.

The economic situation worsened and every day businesses closed. An association was established in town to help the needy. Every day two hundred people would show up to get food or a place to stay. In the run-down area of town there was a wooden structure that once served as a warehouse, which the Jewish carpenters of the town voluntarily renovated. It was converted into a hostel with kitchen and dining room. Most of the donations for the purchase of food, beds and blankets came

from the Bund.

In Rynek Square the owners of the stalls stood and advertised their wares in the freezing cold, but there were few buyers. Ida would buy a bit from one vendor and a bit more from another one, just to make them feel good, so that they could go home with a bit of money in their pockets. She would go to the market with her daughter in tow, who would proudly demonstrate her ability to converse in fluent, juicy Yiddish with some of the bearded vendors who had difficulty with the Polish language.

Crucial Decisions

On Christmas Eve the city was covered in a thick white carpet of pristine snow. In the windows of the Christian houses colored candles were flickering. Outside the sounds of bells on the decorated horse-drawn carriages could be heard as they passed between the houses, taking people to and fro.

In Wolf's house the table was being set to celebrate Lilly's twenty-third birthday. As much as they tried to cheer each other up, the atmosphere

was worrisome and artificial. Lilly wore her festive clothes and put on makeup for the occasion, knowing that Adek would soon be coming holding a bouquet of flowers and perhaps even bring her a small gift. Jerzy went out get firewood while Ida and Pauline checked on the dishes that had been warming since early afternoon.

When the entire family was sitting around the table enjoying the meal, Adek suddenly rose and turned to Wolf who was sitting at the head of the table and asked for permission to speak.

"My dear Wolf," he began."I turn to you with a trembling heart, in the hope that your response will not disappoint me."

Wolf turned serious and could not wait to hear what Adek had to say."Speak, speak. Don't keep me in suspense." he said.

Everybody around the table, including Wolf, were sure that Adek was going to ask Wolf for Lilly's hand in marriage. But that was not what happened.

"I beg of you to allow me to take Lilly with me to Palestine. My brother and I have decided that we are leaving as soon as we receive the certificates from the *Hachalutz* organization. That may take several weeks. I implore upon you to permit me to submit an application on behalf of Lilly and let her come along with me."

Wolf's face turned red with anger. "No, no and again, no. I already told your father once that I will not allow her to go to Palestine."

"What if we get married before our journey?" he asked, as Lilly blushed and leaned over as if looking for Balbina.

"I would be thrilled if the two of you married each other. You know that I love you like a son, but I will not let Lilly go to Palestine. If you want to emigrate to anyplace else, I would not mind, but certainly not a place where there is malaria, typhoid and where you will have no income to

support a wife," Wolf replied.

Adek remained silent and lowered his head. Lilly got up and ran out of the room with Ida following her.

Adek knew that he had lost Lilly forever. He did not tell Wolf that that he already had the certificates in his possession. He knew that Wolf would not change his mind so he decided to leave the house as soon as possible. He got up, kissed the hand of Paulina, thanked his hosts for dinner and without looking at Wolf he walked out of the house.

A few days later the Zaidenbaum brothers, accompanied by their father Isaac, left for Przemysl, the closest border town, to cross into Lvov in the Ukraine. From there they would go to the port city of Odessa, to take a boat to Palestine.

Adek had given Isaac a letter for Lilly and asked him to get it to her. The next morning Isaac walked to Lilly's house to deliver the letter.

After knocking several times, Lilly opened the door. She stood in front of him and just stared trying to understand the reason for the visit.

"Has something happened to Adek?" she asked, with visible anxiety.

"No, thank God nothing has happened to him. He left yesterday with his brother and left a letter for you," he told her as he handed her the letter.

Lily looked at him suspiciously. "Where did he go? When will he be returning?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"He left for Palestine, and said to tell you that he would write to as soon as he arrives," Isaac replied.

Her meeting with Isaac was a very difficult one for Lilly. She did not read the letter nor did she throw it away. She folded it up and placed it between the pages of a book that was lying in her library; a book called "The History of Spanish Jewry," written by her great-grandfather

Abraham Shalom Friedberg. Lilly had never read the book.

She decided that from that moment on she would devote herself entirely to herself. Perhaps that would take her mind off her love who had just left to a far away land and whom she might never see again.

Lilly called her friend Fela in Warsaw and told her all that had happened. Fela invited her to come and spend time at her home in Warsaw. Lilly immediately accepted. She told her parents that she would be going to Warsaw to be with her friend Fela Goslawska and while she was there she would visit Moses and Cesia.

She hugged her dog Balbina and let her lick her face. Paulina was sitting near the fireplace, and Lilly put Balbina on her lap. The fire was spreading cozy heat throughout the house. At times the temperature in the month of January could drop to as low as minus thirty Celsius.

Lilly borrowed her mother's silver-colored fox fur coat along with her felt hat with a feather on the side. She wore a red scarf that matched in perfect contrast the grayish color of the coat and the black leather pants she wore on her shapely legs.

Lilly drew a beauty spot on her right cheek, put on sensual red lipstick and looked at herself in the mirror. She put on a fake smile and walked over to her beloved grandmother to say goodbye.

"Grandma, I love you most of all, because you do not interfere in my life, although you are the smartest and have the most experience."

"It hurts me to see you suffer, but you should know that he will return. The mosquitoes in Palestine are the size of birds, the heat is unbearable and the Arabs walk around the streets with knives killing Jews. There is no work to be found and the British are constantly raiding Jewish homes and arresting people. Wait and see how this pampered young man will quickly return to his father's house and to you," Paulina said.

"Do not worry dear Grandma. By the time he gets back I will have had children and you great-grandchildren," Lilly said with a smile.

"I see you are okay. How are you getting to Kielce?" she asked.

"I assume by bus," Lilly answered.

When she arrived at the train station, she fortunately did not have to wait too long as the train to Warsaw came on time. Lilly got on and entered a compartment where three young men who had just arrived from Cracow were sitting. The three of them immediately stood up and offered her a seat. She greeted them, thanked them and sat down near the door. The three were college students from Cracow on their way to enjoy themselves in Warsaw.

"I had no idea that in Kielce there are such beautiful girls," one of them commented to her.

Lilly took a book from her bag and began to read it without even responding to him.

They continued talking amongst themselves about their studies without making any more comments to her.

Lilly, who had been a bit tense earlier on, began to relax and even started stealing glances in the direction of the young men. One of them seemed older than the other two and was also more handsome. He had light-colored hair that was cut very short and he was dressed formally in a gray suit with a matching tie. The other two were dressed casually, but in expensive clothes.

From their conversation she gleaned that the older one, whose name was Henryk, had completed his studies in engineering while the other two, who seemed to be around eighteen years old, were just beginning their schooling.

Henryk felt that Lilly was looking at him and every once in a while their

eyes met. Lilly got up and went into the hallway and immediately after, Henryk got up and also went out to smoke a cigarette. Seeing Lilly standing here, he turned to her and said, "I am sorry I did not offer you one," and handed the pack to her. Lilly took a cigarette; he was quick to light it for her.

He introduced himself to her and said, "My name is Henryk."

"I am Lilly," she replied with a smile.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To Warsaw, to visit a friend I haven't seen in a long time," she responded.

"We are going there too; for the fun of it. We do not know the city at all. Do you know where to go in the city to have a good time?" Henryk asked.
"Where will you be staying?" she asked.

"We have reserved rooms in the Hotel Europejski close to *Saski* Gardens," he answered.

Lilly realized that the three belonged to the upper class since they were staying at such a luxurious hotel.

"I know several cinemas, a theater, a restaurant or two, a café with a dance club that just recently opened, but not much else. My friend who lives in Warsaw surely knows of many more places," Lilly answered.

"Then I have no choice but to meet with your friend. Is she as pretty as you are?" he asked

Lilly blushed, which Henryk noticed.

"I gave you a compliment, I did not want to embarrass you," he said apologetically.

"She's more beautiful than I am," she answered.

"Now I am even more curious to hear about places of entertainment in Warsaw," he said.

When the train arrived at Warsaw Central Station they all got off, as it was the last stop.

Henryk walked alongside Lilly, while the other two walked behind.

"Can I order a taxi for you?" he asked politely.

"No thank you. My friend, Fela, is supposed to meet me right outside the station," she replied while looking at her watch and walking a bit faster.

"Will you allow me to meet her?" Henryk asked.

"I hope she comes as promised," Lilly commented.

As they neared the exit, Lilly noticed Fela standing and looking for her among the passengers. She called out her name, ran over to her and they hugged each other for a long time.

Henryk approached them and introduced himself to Fela.

"Forgive my rudeness, but your friend Lilly and I are old acquaintances. We spent several hours on the train from Kielce to Warsaw together in the same compartment."

Fela looked at Lilly and said laughingly, "You don't waste any time."

"May I accompany you young ladies?" Henryk asked.

"We'll manage by ourselves. Thanks anyway," Fela said while Lilly pulled her arm.

Lilly turned towards him and shouted, "We will come to visit you at the Hotel Europejski."

"You have to tell me everything that happened with Adek and all about Henryk. We have a lot to talk about," Fela said as they got into the taxi.

"I am so glad to see you, my dear Fela," Lilly said as she hugged and kissed her friend.

The Last Heady Days in Warsaw

The first thing Lilly did when she got to Fela's house was to call her parents and tell them that she had arrived safely. Next, she called her Aunt Cesia to say hello and tell her that she was in Warsaw.

The two girls then locked themselves in Fela's room. Lilly was too tired to even talk and to tell Fela everything that had happened to her recently. She fell asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow. Fela covered her with a thick quilt and lay down beside her.

When Lilly woke up it was already noon. She quickly got dressed and got to the living room, where Fela and her mother were sitting and drinking tea next to the fireplace that gave off a warm cozy heat.

"Mrs. Goslawska, how wonderful it is to see you again," Lilly said and went over and hugged her warmly.

After Lilly had had some honey cake and tea, Fela said, "Let's go out for a walk Lillinka. After all, we are not going to stay at home all day."

"Don't go on any side streets. There are hooligans who roam the streets, especially in the Jewish areas," Mrs. Goslawska said.

"Don't worry. Nobody will touch us or do anything to us. If they try, Lilly will swear at them using some juicy Yiddish curse words and they will

leave us in peace," Fela said laughingly as she pushed Lilly to hurry up and leave the house.

"Mother is forever worrying. She forgets that years pass by and I am already twenty-three years old. Her latest worry is that I will never get married. She always finds something to worry about," Fela said.

"I thought that only caring Jewish mothers worry," Lilly said, and they both burst out laughing.

"Where shall we go?" asked Lilly.

"You surely want to visit the handsome guy you met on the train. You really liked him."

"Yes, but first I want to be alone with you. We have a lot to talk about.

Let's go to a café," Lilly suggested.

"Okay. There is a new café that just opened called, Café Adria, but the truth is that it is better to go there in the evening when they have performances and dancing," Fela said enthusiastically.

"Let's go instead to an Italian café, *Cukiernia Wloska*, and have a coffee with whipped cream topping."

"I agree," said Lilly. And so they did.

Afterwards they walked through Wilanow Park, they sat down on a bench overlooking the palace. Lilly told Fela all about Adek and his brother who had decided to go to Palestine, the attacks on Jews in Cracow and about her bitter disappointment when the acting school she attended shut down and she was forced to return to Włoszczowa.

Fela listened to Lilly as tears welled up in her eyes.

"Look," she said, "Time will pass and one day you will return to the theater. Don't let it get you down. At present, this is your destiny and you must accept it with love.

"My dear Fela, are you serious?" Lilly interrupted. "Accept everything

with love? What kind of love is it when your fiancé leaves you for miserable Palestine."

"Lilly, I like your fighting spirit. I am sure you can't wait to meet Henryk," Fela said as she hugged Lilly.

"Let's go, I am getting cold," she said.

As they left the park, they saw a horse-drawn carriage approaching. They stopped it and asked to be taken to the Hotel Europejski.

When they arrived at the hotel and checked with the reception, they were told that Henryk and his friends were indeed registered as guests at the hotel, but were not in their rooms at the moment.

Lilly asked for a piece of paper and wrote a note which she left for Henryk at the reception.

"Please meet us at Café Adria at nine o'clock. Lilly and Fela"

She gave it to the clerk and asked for it to be given to Henryk, but not before pressing her lips, with lipstick on, on the note.

Café Adria was a modern café with a six-piece orchestra and a singer. It also had a large dance floor and occasionally professional dancers would perform.

Fela and Lilly chose a table for five, right in front of the dance floor. They each ordered a "*bomba*," a sweet refreshing cocktail made with vodka and rum and green liquor.

"It's already a quarter past nine. Do you think they are coming?" Fela asked,

Just as Fela finished wondering, Lilly saw them walking in. She waved so that they notice her.

Henryk came with one of his friends.

"Janus is not feeling well, so he stayed behind in the hotel," Henryk said as he sat down next to Lilly.

"Let me introduce you. This is Mark."

"What will you drink?" the waiter asked as he approached the table.

"We will also have a bomba, same as the young ladies," Henryk replied.

As the orchestra began playing the popular Polish song, "Sex Appeal," the singer came on stage dressed as a woman and wearing a blonde wig, mimicking the American actress *May West*, and began singing.

Man and woman,

Whispering together about sex...

Pleasures with Eve – maybe it's always been this way...

Long hair, not much sense...the world is laughing...

A woman smiles and poof!

Her man's money is gone!

Sex appeal!

With it, women become...

(Sex appeal!) they become what men lust for.

Charm, enticement, the blink of an eye and he's a goner!

She winks just once, he loses his mind...

Quick and easy, she saps his strength...

Akh! Okh! Vey! Oy!

Sex appeal makes 'em fall like straw

Lipsticked smiles enough for everyone...

A man falls at her feet whether he is poor or rich...

The weakest woman is stronger than iron,

The ugliest one can still blow your cool.

Charm, enticement 'chic', style – my madam, sex appeal!

You are strong and mighty. We're the weaker sex.

But we've got a little something that you're dying to possess.

It's equal to your macho, it unmans your punch and slap.

Although we're little women, we know how to get own back.

Sex appeal – the weapon of all women, Sex appeal – the heat that makes you simmer,

Grace, style, charm, chic – This can make a strong man weak – Oh-Oh-Oh...

Just one sigh and you won't even gather

What or how you'll sigh forever after.

Ech, Och, uch, ach, you will suffer something fierce.

Just one little smile and even the toughest man rushes to please us.

To please us and ease us and treat us like porcelain.

The weaker sex, and yet we are the stronger, the weaker sex, but our power lasts longer.

Grace charm, chic, style – our weapon is sex appeal.

The crowd that filled the cafe was driven into a frenzy. They joined in singing while many, including Fela and Marek, ran onto the dance floor and began dancing wildly, "*Sex appeal, the weapon of grace...*"

For a moment, Lilly shut her eyes and imagined that the outside world was blotted out and had ceased to exist. No Jews were beaten, the Germans in the west and the Russians in the east were no longer a threat, no more disappointing lovers, no more parents concerned about the mosquitoes in Palestine being the size of birds. "*There is only sex appeal to tease you...*"

"Come dance with me," Henryk whispered into Lilly's ear. She did not respond, just sat there frozen as her gaze wandered around the hall.

"Lilly!" This time he raised his voice and took hold of her hand. She suddenly snapped back, opened her eyes, looked around and saw everybody dancing, including Fela and Maerk.

She turned toward Henryk, who was standing bent over her, grabbed his

hand and said, "Henryk, do you want to dance with me?"

She got up and they walked hand-in-hand towards the dance floor. In the meantime the band began playing a slower song. Lilly allowed Henryk to lead her to the center of the floor where they danced and she rested her head on his chest. With his hand around her waist, he held her tightly.

When they returned to the table, Henryk moved his chair closer to Lilly and offered her a cigarette. They ordered another round of *bomba* and sat there just staring at each other, smoking and drinking. Lilly put her head closer to Henryk and he kissed her on her lips. They looked like old-time lovers, even though they had only met each other a short while ago.. She wanted to feel him, see him, smell him, taste him, hear him and touch him.

The next day, Fela and Lilly were so tired that did not get up until noon, when they smelled Mrs. Goslawska's cooking and started to feel hungry. The sun came out from between the gray clouds, slightly warming the people who were wrapped in their heavy coats. Winter was at its height and the temperatures sometimes dipped to twenty degrees below zero. After rain there was a significant rise in the temperature. Now that the sun had come out, people were saying that "summer" had arrived as they left their homes to go out a bit.

Fela suggested that they go to *Ziemska* Street, an area that attracted young writers and free-spirited intellectuals, and where the food and drinks were very affordable. Lilly, whose thoughts were consumed by Henryk, suggested that they go to the *Femina* cinema located in the Bacharach building.

Fela did not object; after all, Lilly was her guest. Before they left to go downtown, however, they stopped at the Hotel Europejski, to find out if Henryk and Marek wanted to join them.

Approaching the receptionist, Lilly asked to be connected to Henryk's room. Much to her surprise, the receptionist told her that the three young men had checked out early in the morning.

"Did they leave any message at all?" Lilly asked, with disappointment evident in her voice.

"Is your name Lilly?" the clerk asked holding an envelope with the name Lilly written on it.

"Yes, that's me," she replied and the receptionist handed her the envelope.

Lilly walked over to Fela, who was sitting comfortably in the magnificent lobby.

"They checked out, but left us a letter," Lilly told Fela.

Lilly sat down next to Fela, as they tore the envelope open and looked at the letter that was written in a neat and beautiful handwriting.

My Dear Lilly,

Our departure was not a planned one. I am sorry, but something came up and we had to leave. I hope you are not angry with me, as I really like you and enjoyed your company very much. Marek also enjoyed Fela's company and asks if she would write to him at the following address. (He included his full name and address).

I would very much like to meet you again, either in Cracow or in Włoszczowa. Please write to me to the address that I included at the top of the letter.

With big hugs and many kisses,

Yours, Henryk

"Now it is only the two of us. Shall we go to a movie or to a restaurant? Perhaps you will meet somebody else," Fela teased Lilly.

"Whatever you want is fine with me," Lilly replied.

Suddenly Lilly reminded herself that she had planned to visit her aunt and uncle. "Oh my God," she said to herself.

"Won't you come along with me, to visit my aunt and uncle. I must go and see them Afterwards we can go to a "hippie style" restaurant. We can walk there as it is not that far to Ogrodowa Street.

They chatted with each other the entire way.

Fela spoke her mind and said that the boys knew all along that they were leaving that morning, and took advantage of their naiveté. Lilly on the other hand, thought that something had really happened, for if they were whippersnappers, they would not have left an apology letter along with their addresses. While they were arguing, they reached *Orgodowa* Street. Cesia hugged Lilly and kissed her on both cheeks. Jerzy, who was excited to see Lilly, hugged her, while Moses walked over and complimented her on her appearance. "Superstar," he repeated several times.

Fela was welcomed very warmly. They sat in the magnificent living room while a servant served them tea and crispy, delicious cookies.

"Have you heard anything from Adam?" Lilly inquired.

"Yes, he calls every few days. He meets with David, who comes once a week to Brest, and they spend time together. He works very hard, specializing in surgery and already performs minor surgeries alone," Moses answered.

Fela sat and observed this typical Polish family. How different they were from the way Jews were described in the anti-Semitic press, as caricatures with black hats, long noses, cunning and evil.

Many thoughts went through her mind. She wanted to tell them how wrong the press was, ask them what the meaning of all this hatred was and apologize to them and explain that not all Poles were bad. At the last

minute she stopped herself and decided not to say anything so as not to insult the people who had received her so warmly, the family of her best friend Lilly, whom she so appreciated and loved.

Cesia insisted that Lilly and Fela stay for dinner. All Lilly's pleading and her threats never to come again did not convince Cesia otherwise.

That evening during dinner, Lilly told all about her trip to Turkey, about the wonderful Aunt Isabella and about the delicious foods she had eaten at various restaurants. The topic that interested Moses the most was the freedom of religion and of the modern and advanced laws in Turkey. He asked many questions; being a businessman, his mind was busy thinking about the future.

Before leaving, Aunt Cesia gave Lilly and Fela silk scarves from Paris. Moses called his private chauffeur, who lived in one of Moses' buildings, to take them to Fela's house.

The next morning, Lilly decided to return home. Fela accompanied her to the train station. Before they parted, Fela gave Lilly a sealed envelope and asked her not to open it until the train was well on its way.

Lilly could not wait and as soon as she settled in her seat she opened the envelope. Inside there was a portrait of Fela and on the back side there was a handwritten dedication.

To my dear Lilly,

When you are among people keep on smiling,

And cry only when you are in hiding.

Take your dancing with ease and in stride,

And treat the rest of your life with great pride.

Lilly kissed the picture and continued to look at it for a long time before putting it back into the envelope and placing it into her pocketbook.

Sounds of War

On March 15, 1939, the German army invaded Czechoslovakia and occupied it without firing a single shot. After Czechoslovakia had surrendered Germany immediately announced the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Czechoslovakia thus ceased to exist and was virtually erased from the map.

Poland, apprehensive about such a fate, had, earlier in the decade, initiated intensive diplomatic activity with Germany, resulting in the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact being signed on January 26, 1934. According to the Pact, both countries pledged to resolve their problems through bilateral negotiations and to forgo armed conflict for a period of ten years. In October, 1938, the Nazi foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop pressed Poland to renew the non-aggression treaty in exchange for allowing the city of Danzig (Gdańsk) to be annexed by Germany. Poland viewed this as a demand, which it couldn't accept. As a consequence, the Non-Aggression Pact was unilaterally cancelled by Adolf Hitler, and Germany renewed its territorial claims against Poland. As a result, in March 1939, Poland asked for, and received, a guarantee from Britain of assistance in the event of being attacked by Germany. At the same time, Germany sent von Ribbentrop to Russia where he signed a non-aggression pact with the Soviets, known as the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. In addition to stipulations of non-aggression, the treaty included a secret protocol that divided territories of Romania, Poland and several other countries into German and Soviet "spheres of

influence."

That year, the third of April was Passover eve. Since the Friedberg, Nachimson and Wolowelsky families were totally secular, they never celebrated Passover. They took no notice of it, other than perhaps knowing of its arrival, due to the preparations being done by the traditional and Orthodox population. For them, the holiday had no significance, in part, perhaps, because they did not know the meaning of it.

Currently, with the increasing threat to the existence of Poland as a country and to the survival of its Jewish citizens, the desire to belong to the Jewish people and maybe take part in their destiny was suddenly awakened in the hearts of those who had never identified with religion at all.

Wolf consulted with Moses about perhaps celebrating Passover that year. They decided that they would celebrate the *seder* jointly in Warsaw in Moses' house. When Ida invited her sisters and their families, they were thrilled about the idea.

Stanislaw and Eugenia arrived by train together with Roza. From Włoszczowa they took the new direct line to Kielce and then changed to the Cracow-Warsaw line. Wolf came by car and took along his mother Paulina, his wife Ida and his children Lilly and Jerzy. Berta and Hermann came from Łódź with their two children, Irka and Mietek, along with Ilia's two daughters, Stephanie and her husband Cezary and her sister Mila. Adam and David came from Brest-Litovsk.

The table was tastefully and magnificently set, surrounded by chairs with colorful cushions. At the end of the table a chair stood empty with a silver cup filled with wine in front of it that was reserved for Elijah the Prophet. Everyone took their places and at the head of the table opposite

Elijah's seat, Hermann took his seat. Since he was the "expert" among the group, he was chosen to lead the seder.

On the table there was the "Seder Plate" which contained *matzah*, *maror* (bitter herbs), *haroseth* and an egg. Hermann did a wonderful job explaining the significance of eating these items.

Nobody dared to touch the delicious smelling food; they just sat listening to a long story of the exodus of Children of Israel from Egypt many years ago. For most, this was the first seder they had ever attended.

After listening to Hermann relate the story, they all raised their wine filled cups and Hermann recited the blessing on the wine. He then recited the blessing, "Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe, Who has sustained us and provided for us and helped us reach this time." They all responded with "Amen".

After they ate the *matzah*, *maror* (bitter herbs), *haroseth* and the egg, the waiters began serving the meal which consisted of chicken soup with a large *matzah* ball floating in it and then a sumptuous portion of meat with side dishes.

Everybody sat mesmerized and did not want to spoil the spirit of the evening that symbolized the feeling of slavery and the yearning of Jews dispersed throughout the world to be a free people in their homeland.

Wolf, who was sitting next to Lilly turned to her and said, "Perhaps I should have let you go to Palestine. Who knows if in my stupidity I was actually wrong."

Lilly rested her head on his shoulder and placed her on his hand on his back and said, "Papa, nobody knows what will be. I realize that you acted out of love and concern for me."

Stanislaw took a piece of paper with the words of the traditional Passover song "*Leshanah Haba B'Yerushalayim*" (Next year in Jerusalem)

were transliterated and began to sing and everybody joined in. Suddenly Moses stood up and asked for permission to speak to everyone. "My dear family," he began. "I would like to thank you all for coming. I view Passover not just as a Jewish festival, but as wonderful opportunity for the family to get together, to see each other, talk, exchange ideas and enjoy each other's company. That is precisely why I organized this seder. May it be His will that we turn this into a yearly tradition and meet once or even twice a year. Perhaps we can even get a double mitzvah (good deed) and meet for the Jewish holidays, such as Passover and Rosh Hashanah. And now, let us raise our wine glasses in honor of the unity of our family and of our people. May we always be aware of who we are and with whom we belong."

He then added jokingly, "Has anyone forgotten to bring a *kippah* (skullcap)? Don't forget one next time." Everybody laughed and sipped from their glass of wine.

The conversation then turned to politics. Everyone was very concerned about the agreement signed between Russia and Germany and the partitioning of Poland between them.

"Let us hope that Britain will come to our aid if we are attacked," Stanislaw said.

"Moses waved his hand as if nullifying what Stanislaw said."And how exactly do you propose the British would get here?" he asked. Nobody had an answer.

Moses, who could not be accused of being a Zionist, surprised everybody when he told that last July he had attended a speech given by Zeev Jabotinsky in Warsaw, where he clearly warned the audience that a great tragedy was about to befall the Jewish people.

Moses reported that Jabotinsky opened his speech with following words.

"For the past three years I have been relentlessly begging, pleading and warning that there is an imminent disaster waiting to happen. How do you not see the volcano ready to erupt and spew its flames of death and annihilation?"

The audience sitting in the auditorium raised their voices in protest, but in his typical emotional and passionate style, he continued speaking despite the protests.

"I see a terrible scene," he continued. "The time remaining to rescue yourselves is diminishing and quickly disappearing. I know that it is difficult for you to see it, due to the daily concerns that are troubling and confusing you, but I beg you to please listen to me, to please listen to what I have to say. We are at the final hours. For God's sake, save yourselves now while you still have a chance, because time is running out."

The people then sat in silence and no more voices of protest were heard. Jabotinsky seized the moment and ended his speech with a personal vision and said, "Whoever takes advantage of this moment, will merit great happiness as he will be a builder of the establishment of the Jewish state. I will not see this in my lifetime, but my son will. I am sure of this, just as I am sure that tomorrow the sun will rise."

On September 1, 1939, at 4:45am, Warsaw was attacked from the air. German fighter planes suddenly appeared over the city in wave after wave, dropping incendiary bombs. In the first wave of attack, 1,500 people were killed. Entire districts began to burn and high-rise buildings collapsed, burying their inhabitants. The German invasion of Poland marked the official beginning of the Second World War.

People who had lost all their possessions and seen their homes destroyed, began to wander aimlessly in the streets, lost and confused.

Convoys of Christian and Jewish residents, laden with packages that they had been able to salvage, began marching toward the Bug River northeast of Warsaw. In the following days, when there was a lull in the bombing and shelling of the cities and towns even in the periphery, a mass exodus began. The inhabitants wanted to escape the bombing and the approaching Nazi army that was heading towards the Polish capital. On September 6th, the Polish citizenry heard a dramatic radio broadcast by Colonel Roman Umiastowski, head of the propaganda department in the Polish High Staff, calling on all young men to gather at the Bug River in order to prepare an additional line of defense against the advancing German army.

President Ignacy Mościcki dissolved the Polish government in September 1939 and fled to Romania, while chaos reigned throughout country. At the end of the first week of September, when the death toll had reached nearly 10,000, the German army was at the gates of Warsaw. Hundreds of thousands of people fled for their lives to the east, blocking major traffic arteries and making it even more difficult for the Polish military vehicles to get to the front lines. German warplanes were constantly circling overhead.

Before the outbreak of the war, Warsaw had one of the largest and most vibrant Jewish communities in the world, with close to four hundred thousand Jews living in the city. That represented nearly one third of the city's population.

Jews and Christians alike were called into the army for the defense of the homeland. For the moment the loathing and hatred was forgotten and a unity was forged to defeat the common enemy. In villages, as well as in the cities, recruits dug canals, buried the dead and cleared the rubble while Jewish doctors provided care to the wounded. Locals from

surrounding villages brought food and blankets to the needy civilians, of whatever faith.

Bearded Jews could be seen carrying weapons in their hands and joining the retreating Polish army. Among the Polish Jews there was a strong sense of identity with Poland which found itself in great distress. Many Jews believed that this would bring about a change of attitude on the part of the Christians, and in the future when the political situation would change, the Christians would appreciate the loyalty shown by the Jews in the defense of the Polish homeland.

Since telephone service to Warsaw was severed, Wolf was unable to call Moses. He was able to contact his son David in Mierzewicz Podlaska. He sounded very worried and said that they had experienced one air raid, but that no buildings were destroyed.

Wolf calmed him down and assured him that in Włoszczowa there were no attacks and that things were relatively calm and quiet, although tension could be felt in the deserted streets. "We all just sit at home waiting to see what was going to happen. Do not even try to come here because the roads are very dangerous," he warned David.

Jewish refugees, mainly from heavily bombed Łódź, began arriving in Włoszczowa. The local residents welcomed them with open arms and offered them food, clothing and shelter. Many were housed in schools and sports halls.

The mayor of Warsaw, Stefan Starzyński, issued an order for all able-bodied citizens to aid in the fortification of the city. They had to prepare basements to be used as shelters, set up barricades on the main roads and dig trenches in order to stop the advancement of the oncoming motor vehicles and tanks. Jews and Christians worked shoulder to shoulder, united in the face of the external threat that was moving

toward town.

On September 8th cannons rolled close to Warsaw and began shelling the city. At the same time warplanes flew overhead destroying every building they hit, while incendiary bombs set fire to entire districts. There was a shortage of medical supplies and drugs, and the fear of disease was increasing due to the great number of corpses lying in the streets and under the rubble of buildings. Citizens began digging makeshift graves in public parks.

The city was plunged into darkness with food, water and gas in very short supply. Thousands fled the city as the German army was progressing towards it. Their bravery melted away in the face of the organized armed forces of the enemy that was about to enter the city.

Those fleeing used every mode of transport they could find. They used carts, wagons and horses that were emaciated, exhausted and frightened from the noise of the bombardments. They would leave in the dark of night on their endless journey, with their belongings on their backs while their wives and children trailed behind them. Some fled through the woods where they could not be seen by the pilots who sowed death on the convoys of the fleeing people.

The rumors about German soldiers abusing and mistreating villagers whom they encountered, quickly reached the ears of the residents who remained behind. Rumors circulated about soldiers who burned dozens of people alive and about others who tortured civilians for hours until they died. There were rumors from the city of Lodz about the torture and murder of two hundred civilians, including women and children.

Stanislaw unexpectedly arrived at Wolf's house alone. He knocked on the door and called for them to quickly open it. He was pale and nervous. He asked for all the family members to gather in the living room as he had

something important to say. They offered him a glass of water and he began to talk.

"Listen to me carefully," he began. "I am leaving with my wife Eugenia for Warsaw, where I have got a job in a saw mill outside the city. I beg of you, please do not try to contact me. I have rented a small apartment at this address. I am giving it to you so that you have it, but please do not try to come see me or write to me, as I am pretending to be a Christian Pole. I have forged my documents and changed the first letter of my family name so it is a more Christian Polish sounding name. I changed the name Szajkowski to Czajkowski, same as the famous Russian composer."

As he left, he hugged everybody and said that when the situation quietened down he would be in touch with them.

That evening, he borrowed a vehicle from his workplace to transport his belongings to his new home. He loaded the car with the few possessions he owned, mainly clothing and food stuffs, and he and his wife were off to Warsaw. He left just in time, immediately before the German army entered the city.

They arrived at their apartment in the middle of the night. Stanislaw brought his belongings into the modest apartment, closed the shutters, left Eugenia in the apartment with the door locked and went back to Włoszczowa to return the car.

The next morning his boss did not know where he was, as he had left the vehicle in the yard with a note requesting a day off to look after his "sick" wife. He went to the train station and took the next train back to Warsaw. It pained him greatly to have to leave his family behind; his brother Juziek, Wolf, Ida Lilly, Jerzy, Rosa and all his colleagues at work. He knew that in times as these, he could not worry about everybody. It was difficult enough just to fend for himself.

When he entered his apartment, he hugged his wife Eugenia and both burst into tears.

Under Nazi Occupation

On the fifth of September the German army, coming from the direction of Maluszyn and Kozlow, entered the city of Włoszczowa. The residents of the city locked themselves in their homes, as the troops with tanks and armored vehicles stopped in Rynek Square. The shops were all closed and shuttered and Włoszczowa looked like a ghost town. A German car with a loudspeaker drove through the streets and, in German, announced

the occupation of the city and called upon all residents to continue with their normal daily lives.

A few curious residents took to the streets to watch as a commander, accompanied by some soldiers stationed in Rynek Square, entered the Town Hall. In the marketplace they saw soldiers laughing at some ultra-Orthodox Jews who passed by.

A young boy, dressed in the Christian youth movement *Hercesk ikrzyz* uniform, walked over to one of the soldiers who had called him. The soldier asked the boy a question in German which of course the boy did not understand. The soldier ripped the silver cross that was stitched onto the breast pocket the boy's coat. When the boy insisted on having it back, the group of soldiers burst out laughing and made obscene gestures to him, whereupon the boy withdrew and went home.

After the soldiers left Rynek Square and relocated in the football field on the outskirts of the city, permission was granted to set up the weekly market in the Square again. The square was immediately renamed "Adolf Hitler Platz."

Wolf dared to leave his home to buy some food in the market. He took his son Izio along with him. As they approached the marketplace, they noticed German soldiers, holding their weapons, wandering among the stalls. As they did not seem particularly friendly, Wolf kept his distance from them.

Wolf walked over to a Jewish vendor to buy some potatoes. As he was being served, he noticed a nearby soldier smirking at the bearded vendor with a hat on his head.

"Jude?" he asked as he approached the stand. The vendor nodded his head in confirmation. The soldier approached him and knocked the hat off his head. As he bent down to pick it up, the soldier kicked him into the

muddy ground and began to laugh as he turned the whole stand upside down on top of the man.

Wolf grabbed Izio by his hand and turned to go, when he suddenly heard the soldier screaming, "Dirty Jew, pick everything up."

Wolf and Izio were forced to gather all the potatoes and to re-erect the stand. They then helped the vendor on to his feet. When they were done, the soldier left.

A stunned Wolf, who had forgotten to buy potatoes, just grabbed his son's hand and ran away from Rynek Square towards home.

"Izio and Lilly, you must leave the city immediately," Wolf said. "These soldiers are readying themselves to cause us great distress and more troubles. I spoke to Herman in Lodz, and he told me of mass killings of the population that is taking place. In Czestochowa, soldiers shot indiscriminately at the citizens in the streets and it is estimated that there are over one thousand fatalities. Entire villages were burned together with the inhabitants. In a small village they pierced with their bayonets all one hundred and eighty residents including infants, women and the elderly and burned the corpses in the forest."

Lilly told her father that she would not leave her parents alone. Izio decided that he would move to the big city and pose as a Christian. Since to implement that plan he needed papers, he was determined to obtain them at all costs.

The next day, Izio took his bicycle and rode to the home of his classmate Mietek Pozynowski. Mietek, who was Christian, was at home and glad to see him and invited Izio into his room to talk. While talking to Mietek, Izio noticed his ID card lying on the table, so he asked for a glass of water. As soon as Mietek went to the kitchen, Izio quietly slipped the card into his pocket.

After drinking the glass of water, Izio asked Mietek if he wanted to come with him to the forest to pick mushrooms. Mietek refused, saying that it was dangerous because the soldiers might shoot at them. Izio, who was anxious to leave, thanked Mietek for his hospitality and went home. On his way home he was forced to bypass a roadblock set up by the Germans. Luckily he managed to find his way back home.

When he got home, he cut out Mietek's picture from his ID card and very carefully glued his picture in its place. Now all he had to do was to memorize his new identity number, the date and place of his birth, the names of his new parents and to get used to his new Christian Polish name, Mietek Pozynowski.

On the 17th of September the Russians attacked from the east. Poland now found itself being attacked simultaneously on two fronts. Within a few days the Russians took tens of thousands of Polish officers and soldiers captive, and hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens found themselves one clear morning on the Russian side. In addition, refugees began arriving in endless convoys, all wanting to cross the Bug River into Russia. Initially, the Germans did not stop them and even encouraged them to do so, however, the Russians tried every possible way to stop them, even shooting into the crowd.

David, who lived in Brest-Litovsk with Adam, suddenly found himself completely cut off from his homeland, his home, his workplace and his parents. He was worried about them and tried every which way to get in touch with them. He was able to pass through the checkpoint where the officers knew him, because he would often pass through on his frequent visits.

He stopped a vehicle traveling in the direction of Miedzyrzec Podlaski,

where Dr. Buhaniek had his clinic. The driver agreed to take him along. When he arrived at the building, he found it in a shambles from the heavy shelling, the clinic in ruins and the family members all gone. Outside the building, lying on the ground, he saw a motorcycle with an empty gas tank.

Not far from the motorcycle he saw an overturned truck with a full tank of gas. He found a hose and a bucket and began siphoning the gas out of the truck into the bucket. When the bucket was full, he filled up the motorcycle tank with gas. With the help of a bit of luck, he was able to get the motorcycle to start, and he drove off. He travelled on the back roads for approximately seventy kilometers until he reached Brest Litovsk. When he reached the bridge entering the city, the guards confiscated the motorcycle and he was forced to stop cars along the way until he reached the hospital.

As he was climbing the stairs to the surgical ward, he met Adam just as he was coming out of the operating room to smoke a cigarette. Adam was under a lot of pressure and had no time to talk to David, but he figured out what was happening and immediately gave David the key to his apartment. Before leaving, he said, "We'll meet again if the war ends." It was with such sarcasm that his "red-headed" cousin Adam responded when he was under stress.

David saw the influx of refugees flooding the area. They related horror stories, such as Warsaw going up in flames, villages whose inhabitants had been exterminated; the unbridled cruelty to the weakest members of the population, the burning of humans and the firing of automatic machine guns on civilians that had just dug their graves with their own bare hands.

He tried calling his family, but there was no connection since all the

telephone lines were down or cut.

David was unaware that among the refugees arriving in Brest-Litovsk was Stefania, her sister Mila and her husband Cezary. They had been arrested by the Bolshevik army and transferred to Kharkov where they were loaded into cattle cars with almost no food or water and sent on the long journey to Siberia. They travelled the entire trip in complete darkness. Once there, they were interred in one of the gulags built by Stalin to punish criminals and dissenters.

When escapees noticed that the Red Army was treating them as the enemy, by capturing them and transferring them to unknown places, many decided to return to occupied Poland. Christians and Jews alike who had fled their villages, towns and big cities, began returning to Poland in the hope that the situation under the Nazi occupation would be better than what awaited them in the Soviet labor camps in the Urals.

At the end of September, the occupation of Poland was complete, with the Russians in the east and the Germans in the west. It seemed that life in Włoszczowa was returning to normal, albeit with dramatic changes. Schools and public institutions were closed; all vehicles were confiscated, including Wolf's car. He had hidden his motorcycle in Isaac's warehouse, which was empty. School buildings in the town were converted into hospitals for German soldiers.

Groups of Christian Poles began organizing partisan militias that hid in the forests. They included the White Eagles and the *Armia krajowa* (AK). One of the most beautiful buildings was converted into a post office which received letters from Polish prisoners. Every day dozens of Poles arrived and waited until all the letters were sorted in the hope that there was a letter for them from their loved ones.

The weekly market continued to operate every Monday. Soldiers would

walk around the stalls, posing with bearded Jews, laughing and trying to understand the language, and looking at them with great interest.

One day Izio went out to buy some food. He returned after an hour looking pale and frightened. When asked what had happened, he began to tell what he had seen.

"The Germans painted a Star of David on all stores owned by Jews. When Rosen, the haberdasher went out to argue with them, a soldier painted the astonished Rosen's face with black paint, while his comrades stood by rolling with laughter. Elsewhere, I saw how they grabbed several bystanders and ordered them to sweep the streets."

Pauline, who was sitting on the couch with Balbina in her arms, said, "How right my brother Juliusz was when he told you all that it was time to get out of this country. I also told you all to leave."

"Now it is too late, they took my car. Besides where will we go? Who will help us?" Wolf said.

"Perhaps you can go to your friend Father Dabrowski or to Count Jan Sosnowski," his mother replied.

"I'll see what I can do," Wolf promised.

"Let's eat this delicious dish of apples and plums that I prepared. There is no meat in the market, as the Germans confiscated all cattle and pigs," Ida apologized.

Lilly sat on the side in silence, regretting that she had not gone to Palestine with her beloved Adek. She had waited in vain for a letter from him. Isaac also had not heard from his sons since they had left.

Suddenly they heard a familiar knock at the door. They had set up a code of three rapid knocks whenever a neighbor was at the door. Izio was sent downstairs to open the door. When he opened the door, Eva, Zosia's daughter, was standing there with a jug of milk. She handed the jug to

Izio and said, "Quick, take this and I am running home." Before he had a chance to say anything, she disappeared in the dark.

At night they could hear the clumping of boots as the soldiers marched through the streets on their patrols. Other times they could hear rifle fire in the distance.

Three hundred Jews, who had been expelled from the town of Sczcekciny by the German military governor, arrived in Wloszczowa, along with Jews who had left Poznan and Lodz. The movements of all residents of Wloszczowa were restricted as they were unable to leave town, but within the town they were permitted to move freely.

The Jews of Wloszczowa set up a council to represent them when dealing with the Germans, and appointed Mona Landau as its head. He had been the head of a similar council before the arrival of the Germans.

Towards the end of October, the Germans announced the establishment of the *General gouvernement*, General Government, which was the name the Nazis used to identify Polish territories not annexed to Germany.

It was from that day on that all the Jews were forced to wear a white band with a blue Star of David on their right arms.

Wolf went several times to the church in search of Father Dabrowsky, but the priest was never there and nobody could even tell him to where he had disappeared.

All of Wolf's life savings were on deposit in the bank of the Yagoda family in the town of Szczekciny. When the Germans came to town, one thousand of the twenty eight hundred Jewish residents fled. Of those that remained, three hundred were transferred to Wloszczowa. The German soldiers plundered and looted the houses of those that left, taking items of silver, jewelry and even carpets. Three Jews who opposed them were shot on the spot. All businesses were confiscated and their owners

expelled.

Wolf tried to call the bank, which was always trustworthy and honorable, but there was no response. Since he was forbidden to leave Włoszczowa, he could not go to the bank.

Wolf's economic situation began to deteriorate rapidly. Izio suggested that he try to contact Count Sosnowski and ask for help, but Wolf did not do anything, since he had no way of getting to Maluszyn. That was when Izio decided to take the initiative and seek the help of the count.

One evening, at the end of October, dressed warmly with a wool cap on his head and the ID card from his friend Mietek in his pocket, he left home and headed for Maluszyn.

He walked through the forest, never moving too far from the main road. Occasionally a German car would pass and he would lie in the bushes and wait for it to pass. Once when he sat down to rest, he heard rustling sounds coming from the forest. Frightened, he began to run until he stumbled on a tree limb and fell to the ground. He lay still and did not move, as he saw figures walking around as if looking for someone. He was sure they had heard his footsteps. He knew that the partisans hid in the forest and was afraid that they would kill him lest he betray them.

Since the *Armia krajowa* partisans did not accept Jews into their ranks, Jews kept away from them and tried not to go near the areas where they operated.

As he got closer to Maluszyn, he saw a unit of soldiers stationed at the entrance to the town. He decided not to get too close to them, but to try and circumvent them in order to get into the town. Since it was already getting light, it was dangerous for him to be on the streets.

Walking through the forest and back roads, he finally managed to reach the count's mansion with its high stone wall surrounding it. He climbed

the wall and as he was about to jump into the yard, he heard a voice scream "halt," and a weapon cocked. When he jumped back down, he heard a shot being fired and he began to run into the forest with all his might, not looking back. He thanked his lucky stars that the soldiers did not pursue him. Panting, he threw himself on the wet grass where he lay for a while until he was able to breathe normally again.

Izio thus decided to abandon his plan of going to Maluszyn to seek the help of the count, and instead decided to go to Warsaw in the hope of meeting with Moses, who would surely be more than glad to help him. He had to change direction and head north where he hoped to find a car that was going in his direction and take him along.

He was still quite a distance from the main road that went towards Warsaw. Trying not to be discovered, he walked on the back roads until he reached the main highway.

To his luck, the first vehicle that passed stopped for him.

"Where are you going?" the driver asked.

"To Warsaw, to visit my family," he answered.

"Where do you come from?" the driver asked.

"From Maluszyn," he lied.

"What's your name?" the driver inquired.

"Mietek Pozynowski," he replied.

The driver agreed to take Izio along.

Later on in the conversation, Izio told the driver that life has gotten more difficult since the German occupation and the persecution of the Jews. He did not speak sympathetically about them but rather very factual.

"Do you feel sorry for them? They brought this war upon us," the driver said angrily.

"Absolutely not. For my part Poland should get rid of them," Izio replied.

"Bravo. Well spoken. We must get rid of them for good," the driver said. When they arrived at the Warsaw city limits, they were stopped by the military police who wanted to check their identification papers. They first checked the driver's papers and the goods he had and then asked to see Izio's papers. When he handed them his papers, he realized that his hand was trembling. The soldier looked at him suspiciously, but quickly returned the papers to him and told the driver to carry on.

When they got close to the city center, Izio got out of the car. He thanked the driver, who continued on his way.

He walked, while looking straight ahead and not from side to side, so as not to arouse suspicion. He walked rapidly with his head raised as if in a hurry to get someplace.

Warsaw was in ruins; streets were destroyed and many collapsed buildings were still smoldering. There was a horrible stench from the human and animal corpses buried under rubble. It was very difficult to take in the scene and realize how the urban landscape had completely changed.

When he reached Ogrodowa Street he immediately recognized the building. Although the facade was completely destroyed by the shelling, it was possible to enter the stairwell.

He knocked on the door and waited. There was silence on the other side; no one answered. He waited a long time and knocked again whispering, "It is me, Izio." The door opened and he quickly entered the apartment. Moses and Cesia were standing in the living room, both looking very pale and thin. Izio approached them and hugged them tightly. The three stood there hugging each other for a while without saying a word.

"What are you doing here? What happened to the family?" Cesia asked.

"Don't worry, everybody is all right. As of now the Germans are not

necessarily pursuing Jews," he answered.

"Where is Jerzy?" he asked.

"He is sleeping now, but he cries the whole time. We are all very worried about what will happen," Cesia said.

Moses looked broken. The person who was always so sure of himself, the shrewd, wealthy businessman, with servants, a chauffeur and a fleet of automobiles, was now at home, alone, in the dark, his hands shaking, unkempt with an unshaven red beard, wearing clothes that were wrinkled and dirty.

Cesia began to cry as she told Izio what had happened.

"Moses has been through great humiliation and pain. The Germans grabbed him, beat him and forced him to clean the streets. He returned home two days later with a broken rib, a broken nose and bleeding from his face. He was bedridden for ten days and did not want to eat anything."

Izio approached her, embraced her and said, "Don't worry, Auntie. We will get through this. Everything will be all right."

"How did you get here? Were you not afraid of being caught and arrested?" Cesia asked.

"You must get used to calling me Mietek, as I have forged papers with the Christian name Mietek. You do not have to worry about me," Izio said. "I must meet with Stanislaw and Eugenia. I know they live in Warsaw," he continued.

"I had no idea that they live in Warsaw. Do you know where?" a surprised Cesia asked.

"I do not know, but I know that they live in a Christian neighborhood. They are pretending, just like me," he said.

"What about your phone line? Do you have one?" Izio asked.

"Our telephone line has been disconnected," Cesia answered.

"I wanted to visit Count Sosnowski to see if he could help us, and actually reached his estate. When I tried to climb over the stone wall surrounding it, I noticed that it had been turned into a SS headquarters. When the soldiers saw me, they began firing in my direction. I jumped down and ran; I barely escaped," Izio related.

"We rarely go out of the house for fear that we will be kidnapped by the Germans. We are required to wear a white band with a blue Star of David on it, so that we are easily identifiable. Anybody caught not wearing the white band is shot on the spot," Cesia responded.

"Have you heard anything from Adam lately," Izio asked Cesia.

"No," she answered.

"Do you by any chance have hydrogen peroxide in the house?" Izio asked.

"Yes," she answered. "Do you want it?"

Cesia brought Izio the bottle of hydrogen peroxide which she used to bleach her hair. He diluted it with water and rubbed it into his brown hair. After an hour his hair was completely blonde. He looked into the mirror and was satisfied with his new look.

"May I take the bottle with me?" he asked.

Cesia nodded her head in agreement.

Izio sat down next to Moses, put his hand on his shoulder and said, "Uncle, pull yourself together. You have money, and there is still the possibility for you to leave and save your family. Take advantage of the opportunity now."

Izio, in spite of his youth, showed maturity and courage beyond his years. He had always been an introvert, barely spoke, and suddenly now was so mature, calculated and confident.

"I would like to, but do not know where to run. If I go to Russia, they will

kill me. After all, I just ran away from there and I do not have false papers. I think I know what I will do. I will try to get to Turkey. Within the next few days we are escaping from Poland," he said in a broken voice.

"Run away before it's too late," Izio replied in a confident and authoritative voice.

He promised to return. Moses gave him a wad of bills that he divided; he put some in his pocket and the rest he hid in his shoes.

"I am going to search for Stanislaw and then come back here to see how you are doing," Izio promised.

Before leaving, he hugged his aunt and uncle and said, "Better days are still to come, when the entire family will sit around the table enjoying a hearty meal."

With those final words, Izio left quietly, closing the door behind him.

He remembered that he had taken along with him the piece of paper where his father had written down Stanislaw's address. He looked at the paper but wondered if it was the correct address.

He went down to the street and waited for the tram.

He got on the tram as soon as the doors opened. The first thing he noticed was that everybody was staring at him. At first did not understand why, but when he realized that all the passengers were wearing a white armband with a blue Star of David on it, he realized that he had taken the tram intended for Jews only. At the next stop he jumped off, before he was noticed by the Polish police patrolling the streets, and took the right one.

When the tram reached his intended stop, he got off and began the long walk to Stanislaw's apartment. He decided to try to get a lift with one of the many "half bicycles" that were on the road. Since the Germans had

confiscated all the cars, the "half bicycle" had become the new mode of transportation. It was a bicycle with a cart attached to it in the front where two people could sit. After a few minutes, one stopped which took him to the area where Stanislaw lived.

After walking around for several minutes he found the street, the building and a mailbox with the name Czajkowski written on it. He knocked on the door several times. There was no answer but he decided to wait.

He crossed the street and went into the church located opposite the house. He knelt, crossed himself, lit a candle and sat down on one of the benches and waited. When it got dark, he left the church and waited outside within eyesight of the building. The street was very quiet, with no human movement.

Izio suddenly noticed a tall figure advancing towards the building and immediately recognized it as being Stanislaw. He walked right by him, but Stanislaw just kept on walking without recognizing him.

He turned around to pass him again, but this time he whispered "Stasiek" as he passed him. Stanislaw turned around, looked at him and immediately recognized him, "Come, follow me," he whispered. They both rushed and entered the house.

The apartment was totally dark. Eugenia was lying in bed, covered with a blanket over her head. "You can get up," Stanislaw said to her. As soon as she noticed Izio, she got up and hugged him saying, "My dear Izio, how much I missed you. How is everybody? What is happening at home? Why do you look so yellow?"

Izio laughed. He sat down and told them at length about everything that was happening in Wloszczowa and about his visit to Moses and Cesia. "Did you tell them where I live?" Stanislaw asked."

"No, I just told them that I know you live in Warsaw with a Christian identity," he answered.

He also told them about his fake documents, his new name and his desire to remain in Warsaw.

"I'll find a job for you. Trust me, I have an idea, but you must limit your visits to me, so that nobody notices, especially the landlady who can become suspicious," Stanislaw said.

Izio went back to live with Moses and Cesia, as he could not find anywhere to live. They were very glad for him to live with them especially that he knew how to cheer up Jerzy, who was slowly getting used to the new situation.

A week after he decided to go to visit Stanislaw once again. When nobody answered the door, he put a note in the mailbox.

Dear Uncle,

I came by to visit you, but since nobody was at home I will come again next Sunday morning. I really wanted to know how Aunt Eugenia is doing.

Mietek Pozynowski

The next day he went back and found the note still lying in the mailbox. He realized that Stanislaw had not noticed it, so he decided to wait outside. He once again entered the church, but this time there were a number of people present, listening to the priest giving a sermon. He sat in the back row and saw Stanislaw sitting in the front row.

When the sermon was over and the worshipers were standing up, getting ready to leave. Stanislaw noticed Izio. He walked over to him and greeted him with a hug.

Just then a distinguished looking older man wearing a hat and holding a cane came up to Stanislaw and greeted him, "Hello Mr. Czajkowski," he

said.

"Hello, Herr Doktor," Stanislaw said, "May I introduce you to my nephew Mietek from Maluszyn who has come to visit us." Mietek shook the doctor's hand warmly.

"If you are in need of a dental assistant, Mietek would be happy to work for you. He learned the dental profession in Cracow," Stanislaw lied to the doctor.

The dentist, who was a widower and approximately seventy years old and of German descent, lived alone in a large apartment.

"I would be more than happy for you to come to work for me. You can start whenever you are ready. Here is my address and my phone number."

He took a card out of his pocket and handed it to Izio. On it appeared his name, Doctor Alexander Schumacher, Dentist.

Before taking leave of Izio, the doctor said to him, "Mietek, if you want, you can even live with me and make things easier for your uncle in these difficult times."

When they got home, Izio was moved to tears, and said to Stanislaw, "Who is going to look for me in the office of a German doctor?"

Stanislaw and Eugenia both agreed with him that working in the dental clinic was the ideal solution.

A few days later Izio, who had stopped answering to that name, moved into the luxurious home of Dr. Alexander Schumacher. The surprise that was waiting for him when he entered the apartment was the doctor's poodle, *Piłka*, who ran up to him, licking him. It was love at first sight.

Izio was sure that his parents were concerned about him, so he decided to call them, as he was pretty sure that their home phone still worked. Near the post office there were public phone booths. He entered a phone

booth and dialed his parents' number.

"Hello, who is speaking?" Wolf asked as he answered the phone.

"It said me, Papa," Izio replied.

"Oh, my dear Izio, we are so concerned about you. Where are you?"

"I'm fine. I visited Moses and my aunt and uncle, everybody is fine."

Izio spoke in riddles out of fear that somebody was listening in on his conversation. His father understood and did not ask too many questions.

"Are you coming to visit?" Wolf asked.

"I will let you know. Meantime, you know that I am fine. Don't worry about me," Izio answered and hung up.

He stood in the phone booth for a long while, as he was suddenly overcome with emotion and felt homesick for his parents, his sister, his grandmother and his brother David who he had not seen for a long time. Little did he know that this would be the last conversation he would have with his father.

Life in the Shadow of Death

Due the poor sanitary conditions and extreme poverty that prevailed there was an outbreak of typhus in the town of Włoszczowa. The

Germans ordered the Jewish committee chairman to erect a hospital in order to halt the spread of the disease before it turned into an epidemic. Within a few days, the committee had organized a number of craftsmen who renovated an abandoned building so that it could operate as a hospital. They built twenty-five wooden beds, with straw mats to serve as mattresses, found blankets, and organized a staff of nurses and cooks. They were now ready to accept patients.

The first patients to arrive, who came from outlying villages, had become infected when they came to the market in Włoszczowa. Unfortunately, Wolf was among the first patients. When he had started to show signs of abdominal pain and fever, he was immediately taken to the hospital for tests. When a red rash appeared on the palm of his hand and he developed terrible diarrhea and began to hallucinate as his fever went above forty degrees Celsius, it was confirmed that he had typhus. The doctor ordered him to bathe in warm water. Ida and Lilly sat at his bedside all night.

The next morning, his condition improved slightly. His fever dropped and he once again recognized those around him, although his headaches did not subside. He was still very weak and was unable to eat anything. He was unable to keep any liquids down; whatever he drank he threw up. His whole body trembled and shook from side to side. There were no antibiotics available, as the limited supply was sent to the battlefield for the soldiers. He received nothing but painkillers.

That night he once again began to hallucinate and lost consciousness several times. The next morning he returned his soul to his maker.

Ida collapsed. She felt that her entire world had been destroyed.

"Why did we stay here when all of us could have gone to Istanbul? What will happen now?"

Lilly, overwhelmed with pain, dragged her heartbroken mother home where they told Paulina that her beloved son was no longer.

The next day Wolf was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Włoszczowa. Hundreds of mourners came; mourners of all faiths, Jew and Gentile alike, as he had been loved by all. Noticeably missing from among the mourners were Father Dabrowski and Count Sosnowski.

From that day on, Zosia came every day to help Ida with her housework, brought food and even cooked it. She also helped Ida sell her jewelry in order to raise cash.

Ida wondered why she did not see Roza at the funeral and she was worried that something had happened to her. Lilly volunteered to go to her apartment and see how she was.

She made sure to leave during daylight hours and not at night. She walked across Rynek Square, which now was named "Adolf Hitler Platz," passed the pharmacy of Bitoft and reached the street where Roza lived. She suddenly noticed a group of German soldiers advancing toward her. She tried to avoid them but they blocked her way. "*Gib mir eine kuss jude,*" Give me a kiss, Jew, one of them said to her as they all burst out laughing. She began retracing her steps, but they surrounded her from all sides. With all her strength she began running toward the square while they followed behind her. As she crossed the square, she saw that the Bitoft pharmacy was open so she quickly ran in. The soldiers stopped and began whistling and cursing at her, but they did not enter the pharmacy. Eventually they moved on.

Lilly stood in shock, her whole body trembling. Bronislaw Bitoft brought her a glass of water and said, "Drink, my dear, you will feel better."

She thanked him and was about to leave when he turned to her and said, "Allow me to express my grief and sorrow, and that of my wife too, on

the death of your father, and for the difficult times that you are going through. If there is anything I can do to help, do not hesitate to ask." Lilly thanked him for his kind words and ran home.

The next day when Zosia heard what had happened to Lilly, she volunteered to go to see what had happened to Roza. When she reached her house she noticed the windows and shutters were closed and everything was dark. She knocked on the door but there was no answer. She put her ear against the door and listened, but not a sound could be heard coming from the apartment.

She knocked on the door of the neighboring apartment. After several knocks, an elderly woman opened the door. "Sorry for bothering you, but I would like to ask you if you have seen the lady who lives in the next-door apartment lately?" The woman slammed the door in Zosia's face. The neighbor on the floor above had not heard a thing nor did she know to where Roza disappeared.

Zosia returned to the home of Ida and Lilly without having found out what had happened to Roza.

Two weeks later Roza appeared suddenly at Ida's home. She knocked on the door and when Ida opened the door, the two sisters fell on other's necks and began to cry.

"Where have you been? We were so worried about you," Ida said with anger in her voice.

"I ran away to Russia with several hundred Jewish and Christians refugees, not all from Włoszczowa. We crossed the border and reached the city of Lutsk from where we wanted to continue to Kharkov, because we had heard rumors that the Germans were not mistreating the Jews. However, as in the previous war, it turned out to be untrue, so we decided to return to Poland. The Russians were also taking people,

loading them on to box cars and sending them to gulags and to camps in Novosibirsk, places from where you never come back. A group of about fifty of us decided to return to Poland. I have been home already, opened the windows to let fresh air in for ventilation and will soon go back to shut them. I don't think anybody noticed my absence. On our way back, we experienced terrible ordeals. We did come across some good people who helped us in many ways, but there were those that who threw stones at us to make sure we did not come close to their villages," Roza related with great emotion.

"My dear Roza," Ida said, caressing her face, "You could at least have let us know that you were leaving."

"Where is Wolf?" Roza suddenly asked, noticing his absence.

"Wolf died of typhus two weeks ago. His health was rapidly deteriorating and within two days of entering the hospital he passed away. Without medication his chances of recovery were nil," Ida replied.

Roza burst into tears and said, "What will happen to us with all these wars, with all the hatred raging out there from the Germans and the Russians. We Jews are always in the middle."

"Now is not the time to mourn. We can cry for Papa when it is all over and the Germans have left our country," Lilly said.

"If you want, you can stay here with us. You can sleep with me in my bed," Ida offered her sister.

"We'll see, perhaps in a few days. Right now I am going home," Roza answered.

Roza said goodbye to everyone and went home.

In early February 1940, the Germans began to build a wall around an area of Lodz and populate it with Jews. Thus the Lodz ghetto was established.

Herman found out about the plan from his Christian patients who warned him about what would happen. He knew that once he went into the ghetto, there was no getting out. He did not wait until the last minute but took Berta and his two children and paid a Polish driver with a small truck to smuggle them out of Lodz and transport them to Wloszczowa. He figured that in a small town things would be easier than in a large city like Lodz. The trip took four hours instead of two, as the driver went a roundabout way in order to bypass roadblocks. At times they had to get off the road and wait until a convoy of military vehicles passed.

When they got close to Wloszczowa, the driver refused to enter the city and dropped them off about two kilometers away. It was already evening and the city lights were visible.

The Germans had placed a nine o'clock curfew on the town. It was dangerous to be caught in the street after that time. Herman knew that he had to reach Ida's house before the curfew went into effect.

They were forced to carry their heavy suitcases into town. Although his wife Berta and his daughter Irka helped with carrying, Herman would alternate the carrying of the heaviest suitcase, with his son Mietek, every few meters. As the curfew was getting closer and closer, they decided to leave the suitcase on the side of the road and cover it with twigs and a pile of dry leaves. They marked the place by inserting a large branch into the ground, and began to walk quickly toward the town. When they reached the main road, they ran into a military checkpoint, where they identified themselves as residents of Lodz who had come to visit their relatives in the town.

"Do you know that there is a war on?" the commander asked in German.
"Sure we know, but we are concerned for the welfare of our family,"

Herman answered in perfect German.

"How do you know such good German?" the commander asked.

"From home. We spoke German and Polish at home," Hermann answered.

"Are you Jewish?" he asked in amazement.

"Yes," Herman answered, as he took off his jacket to show the white arm band he was wearing.

The commander was a bit surprised since the name Herman Mirabel was not a very Jewish sounding name. Moreover, the fancy clothes and Italian *Borsalino* hat that Herman wore and the fancy glasses that he had on stood in complete contrast to what he expected to see Jews wearing.

"You'd better hurry. The curfew goes into effect very soon," the commander said as he handed them back their documents.

When they finally arrived at Ida's apartment, they knocked lightly on the door. When Lilly opened the door, she nearly fainted from shock. She opened her mouth to say something, but no words came out. Herman approached her, hugged her and then the rest of the family hugged her.

After they had settled in and Ida told them about the death of Wolf, the great joy turned to great sadness. Hermann paced the length and width of the room muttering, "Another catastrophe that did not have to happen."

Herman had taken along with him cash, jewelry and dental gold, thereby guaranteeing the economic stability of the household.

Herman now had to figure out a way of retrieving the heavy suitcases that he had hidden. He had an idea. Lilly borrowed a bike from her friend Eva, attached a basket to her bike and Eva's and, together with her cousin Mietek made several trips to the hidden suitcases and eventually brought its contents home. When the suitcases were empty, they threw

them deep into the woods.

In early February 1940, the Germans hung signs that warned of an "area infected with a contagious disease." The signs surrounded the area in the west of Warsaw, where the majority of the residents were Jewish. Immediately after the signs were hung, the Christian residents began to move out.

In early March, the Germans gave instruction to the management of the *Judenrat* to build a high wall of at least three meters around the entire district. The Germans mandated a date of completion of three weeks hence. They had to work day and night to finish the task and, to make matters worse, the curfew was moved to seven o'clock. The area eventually became known as the Warsaw ghetto.

Those Jews who lived outside the ghetto walls were forced to abandon their homes and property and move inside the ghetto. They had to endure insults from their Christian neighbors who saw them as they were leaving the apartments they owned. "We are finally getting rid of you, lousy scum. Don't ever dare to come back here again." In most cases the neighbors stood outside with expressions of *schadenfreude*, malicious joy, on their faces. As soon as the Jews left, their apartments were broken into and emptied of their contents.

On the eve of Yom Kippur, the Germans announced the official establishment of the Warsaw ghetto, which was to be immediately populated by the Jews of Warsaw. Eventually the date of occupancy was extended to November. Christians and Jews exchanged apartments between themselves. There were Christians who were able to purchase luxury apartments from Jews who were forced to leave and flee to Russia. There were apartments that were just simply abandoned by Jews who fled in the dark of night and which the Christians took over.

Since Moses' house was within the walls of the ghetto, it was not necessary for him to move.

Moses had planned to escape from Poland to Turkey via Romania. He paid a Christian truck driver fifteen thousand zloty in cash to transport him and his family to *Chernivtsi* and from there to Kishinev and finally through Romania to the Black Sea. He promised to pay him the same amount again upon their arrival at their final destination.

On the appointed day the driver arrived with his truck at Moses' house. Moses ran up and down several times loading the truck with his suitcases with their clothing, as well as the suitcase containing Count Sosnowski's jewelry that he was holding as collateral. He had on his possession some cash, but not much. All his money was deposited in various banks in either cash or in shares. Since the banks were closed, he had no access to his money.

Finally everything was loaded onto the truck. Moses sat alongside the driver, while Berta and Jerzy sat in the back.

The truck started moving; they were finally on their way. They drove through the center of the city toward the highway leading south-east. The skilled driver passed several checkpoints by traveling on side streets. He knew that by doing this he was endangering his life, but the huge sum of money he was going to receive at the end of the trip was constantly flashing in his mind.

Moses, who was afraid that the driver, who knew he was a rich man, might attack him, took along his loaded gun which he kept in his coat pocket. His hand was tucked in his pocket as a warning sign to the driver.

The trip out of the city went smoothly as the truck made its way onto the highway leading to Lublin. The traffic, in both directions, was mostly

military vehicles. The driver followed the convoy of vehicles; any thought of overtaking or outmaneuvering them was out of the question. Moses tried to break the silence in order to relieve the tension that reigned between him and the driver.

"Are you from Warsaw," Moses asked.

"No, from Prague," he answered.

Their conversation was interrupted by a military vehicle that pulled up alongside them and signaled to them to pull over. The driver pulled over to the side of the road and stopped the truck as the military vehicle did the same. Two German soldiers came out of the car and approached the truck, ordering the driver to get out. Moses remained seated, tense and nervous, as he took his gun out of his pocket and hid it under the seat.

"*Raus*" Out, one of the soldiers shouted at Moses.

Moses got out of the truck and, approached the soldier. "Papers" shouted the soldier.

Moses took out a Russian passport from his pocket and handed it to the soldier."Oh, you are Russian," he said. Moses nodded his head in agreement and tried to smile. The soldier gave him back his passport.

The soldier looked into the back of the truck, but saw nothing, as Cesia and Jerzy were lying covered with a large thick canvas.

The soldiers instructed them to return to the truck and continue on their way. Moses' heart was beating wildly.

As they began to drive, the driver said, "We were fortunate that they were just soldiers and not Gestapo. Had they been Gestapo, we would not have gotten out of the ordeal alive."

Moses reached under his seat, retrieved his gun and put it back into his pocket. "Do you not trust me?" the driver asked.

"I do not trust anybody" Moses answered.

"You are right. In crazy days like these, you can't trust anybody. However, you can calm down, I will not betray you," said the driver.

When they arrived in Lublin, the driver turned and began traveling in an easterly direction.

"The border is closer this way. If we continue in a southerly direction to the border, we may run into problems. Not all soldiers are as easy going as the last ones," the driver said. Having no choice, Moses agreed.

When they got closer to the countryside, the road became impassable as the ground was muddy and partially frozen. Driving was extremely difficult.

"I cannot continue driving. I will have to find a place to drop you off and you will have to continue on your own. The border is just a few kilometers from here," the driver told Moses.

It was bone-chillingly cold outside. Although they saw a number of houses in the area, they were actually farmhouses whose inhabitants were hostile towards Jews. Moses realized that he was in a dangerous area.

Moses paid the driver the second installment of his payment. As he turned around to get back into his truck Moses stood in front of the truck and did not let him move.

"What happened?" the driver asked.

You must take us back with you. Either we will freeze to death or the villagers will kill us," Moses answered.

"You will have to pay me additional money for the extra risk," the driver said.

"Okay," Moses responded. "When we get back, I will pay you another five thousand zlotys."

"No, ten thousand," the driver protested.

They finally settled on seven thousand zloty and everyone climbed into the truck. Moses did not utter a word the entire trip. He knew that the return trip was a trip to death, just that he had received a slight extension.

When they arrived in Warsaw, there was a great commotion throughout the city. Streets were closed and traffic was completely paralyzed. Thousands of armed soldiers were on the streets and shiny black cars with swastika flags beside the headlights were driving around at high speed.

"Those are the SS," the driver said.

Moses, who was afraid of being arrested, asked the driver to find an alternate route, avoiding the main roads. Most of the time they were stuck in one place and when they were finally able to slowly proceed, the soldiers ordered them to immediately leave the area.

They eventually made their way to a crowded residential neighborhood where all the houses had been destroyed. The streets were nearly impassable and many times Moses had to get out of the truck and move large stones that were blocking the road. At one point, the driver yelled out of the window to someone on a bicycle, "What is the commotion all about?" The man answered, "Hitler is coming and there will be a victory parade tomorrow."

When the truck arrived at their home, they were all beyond exhaustion. As soon as the driver left, they went to bed, covered themselves with blankets and fell asleep.

Moses' residence on Ogrodowa Street was within the ghetto walls and bordered Biala Street which led to Mirowski Square where the old church stood. It was the last street in the ghetto and one wall of the ghetto was built up against his building. Since his apartment was on the

second floor and the wall did not reach the height of one of his windows he was ordered to seal the window. The seal that he put on could easily be removed to allow him to lower a rope down to the Aryan side. He devised a plan of escape, but had to wait for the opportune moment to implement it. He knew that the longer he waited the more difficult it would be to carry out the plan.

The situation in Wloszczowa has not improved; on the contrary, things began to deteriorate. The Germans began treating the Jews with greater brutality and maliciousness and began rounding up people from all over town and re-settling them in the area they called the "ghetto." In February five hundred Jews from Wloclawek were brought and resettled in the ghetto. A soup kitchen was opened that provided one hot meal a day to the most destitute refugees, while those Jews who lived in town were able to remain in their homes. Meanwhile houses and huts were erected in the ghetto, to absorb hundreds of refugees who arrived every day from areas all over Poland.

Ida had recovered somewhat since her sister Berta, husband Herman and their children came to live with her. Grandma Pauline, who had just turned seventy-seven years old, never recovered from the heartbreak over the death of her son. She had lost weight, hardly ate anything and lay dozing most of the day on her chair with Lilly's brown dachshund asleep on her knees, covered with a flowery wool blanket.

Herman, who was fluent in German, did all the shopping and did not hesitate to go out to the market and even chat with the German soldiers. Many already knew him and even asked his advice on health issues when they learned that he was a doctor. He would come home and jokingly say, "I did not volunteer and tell them that I was a dentist, and they did not ask to see my diploma."

Roza came to visit nearly every day, and spent many hours cooking and cleaning. Their good neighbor, Zosia, would occasionally bring eggs or half a chicken that she got from her friends in the village.

Eva also would occasionally come to cheer up Lilly, who had lost all contact with her family in Warsaw, and her two brothers from whom she had not heard a thing.

Letters would still arrive, albeit not regularly. Lilly sent letters to all the addresses she knew, to her uncles in Warsaw, to David in the hospital in Brest, to Dr. Adam Wolowelski and to Izabella Grinevskaya in Istanbul.

Like a Target for Humiliation

At the end of April 1940, the concentration camp in Auschwitz, near Krakow, was built. Rumor had it that the Germans abducted Christians and Jews alike for the construction of the camp.

On the tenth of June, it was announced that Italy had entered the war on the side of Germany. Four days later it was announced that Paris had fallen into German hands and within a week all of France was under German occupation.

The long-awaited letter from Adam finally arrived. Lilly did not believe her eyes. She ran up the stairs of the house and entered the apartment like a whirlwind, startling everyone.

"What happened?" they asked. Lilly waved the letter. "It's a miracle," she shouted. "We've received a letter from Adam. David and Adam are alive." She immediately sat down and read the letter aloud with everyone listening to her.

To my dear family,

I sincerely hope that you receive this letter. I have had no information from you other than the letter that I received from Lilly which was full of deletions which made it nearly impossible to understand. The rumors that I hear pain and sadden me very much. I have no words to describe the horror stories that I hear. At least I know that you are alive and are managing under those terrible conditions. That fills my heart with joy. Although I have written to my parents and brother, I have not received an answer. I have no information about them. I am writing to you because I have received a letter from Lilly, which indicates that the postal system works at least in your area (for the time being).

David fled from Miedzyrzec when the Germans arrived. He came to live with me for several days and then left. I don't know if he was caught and sent to the gulag or to Siberia, or if he went to his uncle in Moscow. In any case he is alive. In Russia the Jews are not persecuted.

How are you getting along in these difficult times? Please write, I want to hear updates. Try to find out how my parents are.

I hope that this situation comes to an end quickly so that we can be together again.

I have promised Lilly that she will stand next to me at my wedding and that I will stand next to her at her wedding; and so it will be.

Be strong.

Lots of hugs to all,

Adam

"It's a good thing that he is on the Russian side. It turns out that things are better by the Bolsheviks. Go figure," Herman responded, sounding as if he was talking to himself.

Lilly read every word of the letter over and over again and then gave it to her mother to read.

"We must find a way to contact Moses in Warsaw. Perhaps through Zosia," she said.

"We will not endanger Zosia with a trip to Warsaw. The roads are very dangerous," Ida said emphatically. "Don't even mention the thought in her presence, for she may immediately volunteer to go, and I don't want her to go."

At dawn on Monday morning, the first vendors arrived for the weekly market in Rynek Square. They began assembling their stands and organizing their wares. Shortly thereafter the first buyers began to arrive

to buy the little produce that was available. Everything was in short supply and of very poor quality. There were some potatoes, some beets, various vegetables and grains of dry corn for milling. Every farmer tried to scrape some merchandise together in order to bring home a bit of money.

It was a sunny spring day and buyers, Christians and Jews, began arriving at the market. Herman also came to the market with basket in hand, accompanied by his son Mietek. In the market, Herman met Isaac, an acquaintance whom he had met on his frequent visits to Wloszczowa. They stopped for a moment to talk, when suddenly out of nowhere a German policeman appeared .He approached a stall where a bearded Jew was selling his wares and began screaming at him in German. The man, who did not understand German, did not respond and did not move, just stood frozen in his place. The people all around began to disperse, when the German screamed, "*Halt*," stop. Nobody moved.

The policeman went into a frenzy, and walked over to the Jewish man, grabbed him by his beard and began dragging him along the pavement. The old man, who was in obvious pain, trailed behind him like a goat being led to the slaughter. When they reached the end of the row of stalls, in front of all the onlookers who were staring with wide open eyes, he took out his gun and in cold blood shot the old man between his eyes. The lifeless body dropped to the floor like a sack of potatoes. The policeman turned around to the people and laughingly asked "*Nechste*," who is next, and walked away without even looking back.

The vendors, along with the customers, immediately scattered in all directions. Two bearded vendors, who probably knew the dead man, loaded the corpse onto their mule-drawn cart and took him away. Within a half an hour, silence reigned in the market and only the pool of blood

where the man was shot remained as testimony as to what had happened.

Herman and Mietek returned home in shock. They did not want to worry the women in the house, so they did not go into details about the incident, and said only that a vendor was shot when a gun accidentally discharged.

The next day, the entire town was talking about the policeman Julek Erdman and the terrible act he had committed. Christians, even those who hated their Jewish neighbors, expressed shock about the incident.

After the members of the family became aware of what had really happened, Herman addressed them.

"We were born into a despised and disunited nation, we were born into a nation that hates itself more than others hate it, and we were born into a nation where the facial features of all are identical in the eyes of the Germans, rich, poor, beautiful and ugly, one face for everyone. Nobody will be spared. We will all die an excruciatingly painful death by the hands of this ruthless gang that is sending us before hungry bloodthirsty wolves. Germany of today is not the Germany of the last war. Germany of today wants to destroy and eliminate all traces of the Jewish people and eradicate it from the world. This is the revenge of the barbarians on a civilized people who did nothing at all to harm them."

When Herman finished speaking, everybody sat open-mouthed as no one had ever heard him speak so bluntly.

Izio was very comfortable at the home of his favorite dentist Dr, Alexander. He was given a room just for himself. Pilka had found a new friend. Whenever Izio would enter the living room she would jump on him and begin licking him. Dr. Alexander loved Izio(whom he of course called Mietek) and especially loved the fact that Izio would willingly

accompany him every Sunday to the nearby church. For Izio it was a great opportunity to meet and greet Stanislaw.

Dr. Alexander taught Izio the work of a dental technician. Although Izio had the professional background, he showed a desire to learn and improve. In the evening, the doctor would sit near the fireplace and listen to Radio Berlin, while Izio would read books that he found in the doctor's library. Sometimes they would play chess together.

Izio tried his utmost to avoid answering political questions that arose during their conversations. More than once the doctor asked him if he did not want to visit his family in Maluszyn. Izio had a gut feeling that Dr. Alexander knew about his Jewish origins but remained silent.

One day, at the end of September 1940, as Izio left the doctor's house , he decided to become adventurous and go see the sights and events of the city. He felt so much more self-confident now that he had proper papers, an address and a business card from a German-Polish doctor that he dared to wander a bit further out than he usually went.

As he walked down the street, he noticed a group of young men following him, but keeping their distance. When he stopped, to supposedly tighten his shoe laces, they also stopped. He accelerated his pace and had entered a narrow alley when he suddenly noticed that the end of the alley was blocked by the ghetto wall.

When he turned to retrace his steps, the group of five thugs stopped in front of him, blocking his way so that he had nowhere to run."Look, look who's here?" a familiar voice said. He raised his head and saw none other than Lolek Bitoft standing in front of him. "Lolek," he cried out happily as he moved closer to embrace him. Lolek pushed him off and exclaimed, "*Parszywy Zydek*, lousy Jew, impersonating a Christian, eh?"

Izio was shocked. He looked straight into Lolek's eyes, but they were not the eyes of the Lolek whom he knew from Włoszczowa. They were the eyes of the Satan, cold and full of hatred.

"How is your prostitute sister?" he asked. He continued with his tongue-lashing and said, "Did she find a nice Jewish boy to screw her?" Izio realized that was in serious trouble. "Lolek is seeking revenge," he thought to himself.

Since he really had no response, and did not dare respond to the group of thugs standing in front of him, he turned to Lolek and spoke to him in a pleading voice. "Lolek," he said, "Is it my fault what Lilly has done to you? Have you no mercy on me? Were you not treated nicely in our house?" He tried to soften the heart of stone that Lolek was displaying.

"Let's get rid of him" one of the thugs who was holding a short iron bar in his hand said.

"No, let him buy his way to freedom for money," Lolek suggested.

For a moment Izio believed that Lolek had cracked and was going to save him from his blood-thirsty friends, so he turned to him and said, "Whatever you want, just tell me."

"Tomorrow, at this place and at this time, you are to bring us five thousand zlotys," Lolek said.

"I don't have that kind of money. Where will I get it from?" a startled Izio replied.

Instead of responding, one of the thugs approached him and punched him in his lower abdomen causing him to double over. While reeling in pain, the thug then kicked him in the head knocking him to the ground. He lay there sprawled out on the ground unable to move.

"Tomorrow, same place and same time, you be there with the money. We know where you live, watch out," one of them shouted.

Izio remained on the ground until the thugs had disappeared. He finally stood up, in total agony, bleeding from his head.

When he got home, the doctor was busy in his clinic. Izio quickly changed his dirty shirt that was soaked with blood and washed his forehead. When the doctor noticed the wound, he rushed to disinfect and bandage it. He was satisfied with the excuse that Izio gave him that he had tripped on the street and fallen on his forehead.

Izio decided to tell Stanislaw what had happened to him. He waited until the afternoon when Stanislaw returned home from work and went to his house. He stood in hiding at the end of the street, because he was afraid of being seen and thus betraying his uncle.

As soon as Stanislaw entered his apartment, Izio went into the building and knocked on the door. Stanislaw was surprised to see him. When Izio told him all about his meeting with Lolek, Stanislaw was shocked and turned pale.

"Lolek did that to you? Are you sure about what you are telling me?"

He was so astounded by what he heard that he doubted what Izio was telling him.

Izio had one thousand zlotys and Stanislaw gave him another two thousand zlotys which he had.

"I hope he will be satisfied with this and leave me alone," Stanislaw said to him.

"My dear Izio," Stanislaw continued. "I think that you should stop coming here. That is, until the danger passes. There is the possibility that he will follow you, discover us and that will be the end of us."

Izio agreed. He embraced Eugenia and Stanislaw and said good-bye.

Izio was so tense, that all of the next day he was unable to assemble even one denture. Everything fell apart and broke in his hands.

When the time came, he left the doctor's office and made his way to meet Lolek. He went in circles and took the long route to the appointed meeting place, as he wanted to make sure that nobody was following him.

When he entered the dead-end alley, the five thugs were standing there, with Lolek among them.

"What have you brought, Jew boy?" one of them called out to him.

He approached Lolek and handed him the wad of bills that he had and said, "This is what I was able to bring. I have no more."

"How much did you bring?" Lolek asked without even counting.

"Three thousand" he answered.

"It's not enough, you swine. Don't you see that there are five of us," he said.

Izio began to cry and said, "I have no more and no place to turn to."

"I am giving you one week to arrange for the additional two thousand zlotys. If you do not come, we will come after you, but this time with a Gestapo officer who will be more than glad to meet you," Lolek responded.

One of the thugs approached Izio and slapped him in the face.

"Enough now, leave him alone," Lolek said.

As the thugs began leaving, Lolek turned around, looked Izio in the eye and said, "It's nothing personal."

Izio quickly left and took a different route home, constantly making sure that he was not being followed. He also wanted to distance Stanislaw and Eugenia from any danger.

Izio knew that the doctor kept a gun in his bedside cabinet, along with a cartridge full of bullets. He decided to flee into the forest and join the *Armia krajowa* (AK). He knew that they did not accept Jews into their

ranks, but with his new identity, no one would suspect that he was Jewish. He wanted to save Stanislaw from the hands of the ungrateful villain Lolek, and the best way to do that was to escape to the forest.

Now that he had a one-week reprieve, he was determined to utilize the time to plan his escape. However, first he needed money, both for himself and to pay back Stanislaw. He decided to find his way to Moses and seek his help.

Izio asked the doctor to give him a free morning and the doctor obliged. He took the tram to Krasinski Park where he got off and began walking along the ghetto walls until he found a breach in the wall near the Great Synagogue on Tłomicki Street. He entered the ghetto, and went along Leszno Street which ran parallel to Ogrodowa Street. He could not help noticing the heaps of trash piled up on both sides of the road as well as the neglected houses. When he entered Ogrodowa Street, he was amazed to see the piles of dirt and litter that had accumulated there since his last visit.

He ran up the stairs quickly, knocked on the door with three rapid knocks and whispered, "It's Izio."

He could hear footsteps approaching and then the door opened. "Come in quickly." It was Jerzy rushing him in and slamming the door behind him. Moses and Cesia jumped on him, hugged him and asked, "Do you have any news?" In their great despair, the slightest bit of news was important to them.

He told them all about his tragic meeting with Lolek, about the beating he had received and the money they were extorting from him. Moses turned red with anger.

"The Poles are a two-faced people. They are full of flattery and self-contempt when they need money or a favor from you, but are full of

hatred and lack of emotion when they do not need you anymore," he said and symbolically spat on the carpet.

Cesia tried to calm him down. "They are not all like that. Don't get so upset, it will cost you your health. They are not worth your getting sick over," she said.

She put her hand on his shoulder and clung to him. Moses was a fighter by nature; he had experienced many trials and tribulations in his life and always emerged victoriously. "The last battle of my life," was how he described the current situation. He felt that he had no more strength to fight.

From a hiding place in the apartment, he brought out a wad of bills, all rolled up.

"Return to Stanislaw the money you owe him and give the scoundrel the money he is asking for. If you can rescue yourself with money, then by all means, do so."

He told Izio of his plan to escape from the ghetto through the window. He confided in him that he had found a Christian who was willing to help for a substantial amount of money. He was just waiting for the Christian to give him the green light.

"Very soon they will be hermetically sealing the ghetto, with nobody entering or leaving. I must escape before that happens," he said.

Before leaving, Izio embraced the members of his family.

"I have no words that can thank you enough. Hopefully we will meet again after the war in good health. This situation will not last forever; the end will come soon."

While sitting in the tram on his way home to the doctor's house, he overheard a conversation between two women who were sitting directly behind him.

"As of today it is forbidden for Jews to travel on trains and trams," one said to the other. "The Germans are doing all the work for us. Hopefully with their help we will be able to rid our country of those lepers and blood suckers," her friend replied.

Izio felt like turning around and punching both of them in the face, but he contained himself and just sat quietly with his head bent and his fists clenched in anger. At his stop, he alighted from the tram and went home. On the fateful day, Izio took the two thousand zlotys, hid them in his socks and went to the designated meeting place. Once again he went in a roundabout way, in all different directions, while stopping to hide inside buildings, just to make sure that nobody was following him.

When he arrived at the meeting place, Lolek was waiting for him with two other thugs.

"Did you bring the money?" Lolek asked in a calm voice.

For a moment it seemed as if Lolek regretted what had happened, but it was an illusion. As Izio handed him the money that he took out from his socks, Lolek spat at him and said, "Is this the money your sister earned from her prostitution?"

Izio did not answer.

Just then one of the thugs came up to him from behind and struck him in his back with an iron rod. Izio collapsed and fainted from the pain. While he lay there motionless, the thug kicked him several times in the ribs. Lolek stopped him and said, "Don't kill the goose that laid the golden egg."

When he began getting back to himself he could see, in his blurred vision, Lolek bending over him.

"In a week at the same place and at the same time, you are to bring an additional two thousand zlotys. Do you understand?" Lolek said to him.

Izio did not respond. He just lay there for several hours until he was able to get up.

When he returned home, bruised and sore, he knew that in the upcoming days a new chapter in his life was about to begin.

Conditions in Włoszczowa

The situation for the residents of Włoszczowa, Jews and Christians alike, deteriorated every day. Since the police officer, Julek Erdman, had murdered the Jewish trader, he had killed two more people in broad daylight.

In the first incident, he had entered the store owned by a Christian, and had begun ranting and throwing merchandise off the shelves. Just as he was leaving, he shot the shopkeeper dead for no apparent reason.

In the second incident he had fired into a group of Jewish refugees who had just come from Poznan. The bullet hit a baby being held by his mother, killing him instantly and seriously wounding the mother. He was feared by all, mainly the Jewish residents, and he became known as "blood-thirsty Julek."

One day, Lilly received a letter from her good friend Fela Goslawska from Warsaw. From the postmark she saw that the letter had actually been mailed three months ago.

Lilly sat on her bed with tears of excitement in her eyes, and read the letter.

My dear friend Lilly,

Not a day goes by that I do not think about you.

I see what is happening with the Jews in Warsaw and my heart bleeds from pain.

The barbaric conquerors have turned professors, engineers, writers, doctors, cultural figures, etc., into walking corpses. They have removed their desire to live, humiliated them before the eyes of all, reduced their pride to dust and trampled them with their merciless claws.

Why do there have to be differences between one race and the other? Between one religion and the other? The answer is because they have no God, as they are not human and are worse than beasts in the jungle, Carnivorous animals devour other animals because they are hungry, while these savages kill other human beings out of spite, hatred and jealousy. They are jealous of the achievements of the Jewish people, their knowledge and capabilities.

Lilly, do not despair, this witch hunt will hopefully end soon.

How I miss you. I really want to see you, but I know that these are difficult and dangerous times. It is therefore impossible for me to come to visit you.

I hope that your family is well and that David is in a safe place.

You will see that in the end, when all this hostility ceases, we will once again meet.

My parents also send their regards.

With love,

Fela

Lilly noticed that the letter did not have the name or address of the sender and figured out that Fela feared that if the letter were to be opened by the German censors she would be in grave trouble.

In early July 1940, a proclamation was posted all over the town of Włoszczowa, that by the tenth of the month all Jews must leave their homes and move into the ghetto. Ida decided to take some of precious belongings to her neighbor Zosia for safekeeping, because she knew that as soon as she left her house the Germans, or local Christians, would steal everything left behind.

Herman helped her pack her belongings into a large sack. In it she put her guitar, a portrait of Grandma Paulina, Lilly's photo album, and a small painted wooden box which contained a thin silver chain with a heart locket hanging from it which Lilly had worn as a baby. She also put into it some family heirlooms that had sentimental value and a satchel with important documents from Wolf's office which included a list of business owners who owed him money and the camera that Aunt Isabella from Istanbul had given Lilly as a gift.

They rushed the sack to Zosia's house and placed it in a wooden cabinet that was in the attic, that was only accessible by climbing a ladder.

Herman gave each family member a small amount of money and what was left he gave to Zosia. She had promised that if they needed more money she would bring it to them.

"What would we do without you?" Ida said as she cried and bade Zosia and her daughter Eva farewell while hugging them tightly. Lilly also hugged Zosia and Eva tightly for a long time and said, "Who would have thought that this day would ever come." They all cried bitterly.

Zosia also took Balbina, Lilly's beloved dog. When Zosia lifted Balbina, it began shaking frantically as it realized something bad was happening. It began by whining softly, sounding like a baby crying in need of its mother, which eventually turned to wrenching cries that made everybody cry.

As the families began leaving their homes and walking the short distance to the ghetto, their Christian neighbors came out and stood in disgrace??? The pharmacist Stanislaw Bitoft, Lolek's father, came out of his pharmacy and watched as the small groups of Jewish families walked towards the ghetto. He knew them all, and some like Lilly, he had known since they were born.

When they reached the building of their allotted room, they met Rosa, who had come alone, carrying a large bag full of her personal belongings. Grandma Pauline was silent the entire time. Ever since the death of her son Wolf, she had not cared about anything and hardly ate. Ida had to persuade her to put some food in her mouth.

The ghetto bordered Rynek Square, starting at Gorky Street, and included Przedborskiej, Śliskiej, Gęsiej, Mleczarskiej and Stodolnej streets.

The Society for the Protection of Jewish Health in Poland (TOZ) sent medicines to the ghetto and all who arrived were immediately vaccinated against typhus. There was a great danger of an outbreak of an epidemic due to poor hygienic conditions, lack of septic tanks and a lack of hot water for washing.

The JDC (Joint Distribution Committee) of Warsaw sent 2,500 zlotys to the Jews of Włoszczowa, along with nearly a ton of flour and various other foods. The Jews established a fund and were able to procure coal for heating, potatoes, beets, onions, a bit of meat, some eggs and soap for bathing.

Four thousand people were packed into the small ghetto area, in extremely crowded conditions; but at least they all had food and shelter. All the possessions of the Jews of Włoszczowa were confiscated and taken from the homes, warehouses and stores that they owned. It was all

stolen by the Germans, who began abusing the ghetto residents, especially the orthodox ones. They would forcibly cut off their *payot*, sidecurls, and knock their black hats off their heads. Some were publicly whipped. The worst of them all was "blood-thirsty" Julek. When he appeared in the streets of the ghetto, everyone knew that very shortly there would be another victim.

It did not take long for it to happen.

The next morning, Julek, all neat and tidy with his shiny boots, walked about with a smile on his face as his devilish eyes scanned the streets looking for his next victim.

He spotted a pregnant woman walking quickly down the street with a boy no more than five years old running behind her. Julek yelled to her "*halt*," and she froze in her footsteps. When he was an arm's length away from her, he lifted his leg and with all his might he kicked her in her lower abdomen. She let out a loud wail and fell on her back to the ground. Blood was flowing from between the woman's legs, for due to the kick the fetus had become detached from the womb. Julek just started at her with contempt.

The boy, who was still holding his mother's hand, finally let go and began screaming in panic. At that moment, the barbarian Julek pulled out his gun and shot the little boy in the head as he fell on top of his mother who was crying in agony.

Julek was very upset that he did not have an audience for his barbaric act, since all the residents of the ghetto were hiding in their rooms and nobody was in the street. At the top of his lungs he growled and screamed, "Stick your swine heads out and take a look."

The only sound that could be heard in the street was the moaning and groaning of the poor woman who did not even realize that her dead son

was lying beside her. Julek approached her and at point blank range shot her in the head.

"I freed you from your misery," he said.

Some German soldiers entered the street when they heard the gunshots. They looked at the shocking sight in disgust. Julek looked at them and with his arrogant laugh said to them, "They have to be disciplined. They think that they are in kindergarten on the banks of the Pilica River."

No-one dared to go outside until the next morning, when two orthodox Jews came with a handcart used to transport the dead and carted away the bodies. They had permission to inter the dead in an area specially designated for the burial of Jews.

Zosia came almost every day to the ghetto in order to see a family member. From time to time she would notice Lilly as she was going from the hospital where she worked as a nurse to her room next to the hospital. Their eyes met and Zosia waved her hand. Lily looked at her blankly and tried to smile, but she was emotionally devastated and could not bring herself to smile.

Every day the Germans would come and take between twenty or thirty men out for hard labor. Half of them returned battered and wounded from the lashes and beatings they had received, while many came back with broken bones.

Ida hardly ever came out of her room. Berta and Roza worked in the community kitchen and helped in the children's school.

One day Zosia brought a package with clothes to the ghetto, and asked the soldiers if they could please make sure that the family received it. The soldier in charge took the package and said he would give it to the management of *Judenrat* who would take it to the family.

As she turned to go, another soldier appeared and inquired what was

happening and wanted to open the package. Zosia tried to explain to him that the package contained personal items and that he should please not open it. Suddenly he turned around and knocked her in the head with the butt of his rifle. She fainted and fell to the ground, hitting her head on the curb. Some passersby, who knew her, lifted her off the ground, took her home and immediately summoned Eva from work. When Eva arrived home, she found her mother in very serious condition and transferred her to the hospital. Zosia had suffered brain injury and lost her ability to speak. She was released from the hospital two weeks later, but it took her months to recover. She never fully recovered as she was never able to speak again.

One day the Germans closed down all the schools in Włoszczowa and forbade the Christian population from engaging in any sort of learning, even in improvised schools or in private homes. Some teachers, such as Wincenty Adamczyk, held classes in hiding, every time in a different location. He was caught after somebody informed on him and was arrested and sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp.

The new refugees, who arrived from the Łódź ghetto to Włoszczowa, related that in the Łódź ghetto the head of the Judenrat, a Jew named Romkowski, who wanted to look good in the eyes of the Germans, forced the people to work extremely hard day and night. He punished some twenty thousand Jews who were unfit for work by sending them to their deaths in the Chelmno death camp. He expelled an additional fifty thousand Jews and scattered them among various camps, where for the most part they were immediately put to death.

One day an order came from the German high command to provide 20,000 children. Everybody knew that it was a death sentence as no-one ever returned. Romkowski turned to the ghetto residents and

announced, "Fathers and mothers, hand over your children." He was convinced that it was their only chance for survival. Many parents who were forced to give up their children committed suicide.

The Situation with Izio

Izio did not return to the home of Dr. Alexander Schumacher. He stole his gun and left some money on top of the dresser with a note that read "Sorry."

He reached the outskirts of the city by taking the tram to the last stop. He stood at the side of the road and waited for a car that was traveling south to stop. He waited for a while until a car stopped.

After driving for about fifty kilometers, they arrived at the thick forest. Izio asked the driver to stop as he wanted to get out. When the driver figured out exactly what Izio had in mind, he turned around to Izio and said, "I will take you to a place where you can make contact."

He turned the car around and drove back a few kilometers until they reached a small village with no more than eight or ten houses. He stopped and told Izio to look for a man named Mark. Izio thanked the driver and as he was leaving the car, he said, "Niech zyje Polska," Long Live Poland, to which the driver responded ""Niech zyje"

A farmer working in a nearby field approached him and led him to a house. When they entered the house, a man came out of a room and introduced himself as Marek.

"Who are you?" he asked Izio, very suspiciously.

"My name is Mietek Pozynowski, from the town of Maluszyn and I wish to join your group. I have a gun."

He took the gun out of his pocket and placed it on the table. Marek picked up the gun and asked, "Where did you get it from?"

"I killed a German policeman," he lied, without casting any suspicion upon himself???

"I will talk to the person in charge. In the meantime, sleep here tonight and I will give you an answer tomorrow morning."

"Show me your papers," Marek said.

He took the gun and the papers and left.

That night Izio did not sleep. On the one hand he was worried that they would kill him in order to steal his gun, and on the other hand he had to take the risk.

In the morning he woke up to the sound of knocking on the door of the room where he was staying.

Marek came in with an older man dressed in civilian clothes, wearing a hat that looked like a paratrooper's beret.

"Come with us, the commander of the partisan unit wants to meet you."

They returned his paperwork to him, but not the gun. He did not ask unnecessary questions and just went with them.

Izio knew his only chance of survival was to join the A.K. *Armia krajowa*. He could at least fight back and hurt those who were hurting and humiliating his people, his family and himself.

Germany Attacks Russia

In May 1941, the Germans attacked Russia and murdered thousands of Jews in the areas that they occupied. The mode of execution was the always same, and the Jews were forced to dig their own graves before being shot.

Many Ukrainians, Latvians and Lithuanians welcomed the Germans with open arms and cooperated with them in turning over the Jews for execution. Polish Christians who lived in the territories occupied by the Germans tried to hide Jews and paid for it with their lives.

David was very far away from the action. He was captured by the Russians shortly after crossing the border into Brest-Litovsk, and was sent by truck some five thousand kilometers away to Novosibirsk, far from the battle zone.

Adam remained working at the hospital in Brest-Litovsk. The Germans did not harm him for they needed him for his medical skills.

After several months a letter Adam received a letter from David. In it he wrote that he had found work at a hospital in small town near Novosibirsk, where he did not have to fear for his life and that very soon he would be getting married to a Jewish girl whom he met in the labor camp.

Adam also sent David a letter, which didn't arrive until several months later. In it he wrote that he was very worried about his parents, his brother, his sister and the rest of the family.

The Situation with Moses

In Warsaw the German propaganda machine was operating at full speed to incite loathing for the Jews in the eyes of the Poles. They did so by means of writing malicious articles in the *Nowy Kurier Warszawski*, the newspaper notorious for its mudslinging articles against the Jews. In one article the Jews were described as, "parasites and leeches that have been sucking the blood of Polish Christians for untold centuries," and with words like, "We have stopped the takeover of Holy Poland by the filthy Jews."

They did everything to alienate the Jewish population from the Poles. They built walls with barbed wire on top around their neighborhoods and sent vehicles with loudspeakers through the streets encouraging the Christian population to hand over any Jew that was in hiding.

However, the reaction of the Poles was just the opposite. They knew that the Germans were the common enemy, of themselves and of the Jews, and thus many helped the Jews in every possible way.

In one instance, in the corner of the ghetto wall, a children's choir would sing accompanied by a small orchestra. On the other side of the wall, a group of Christians gathered and listened to the singing. A Christian

policeman walked around among the audience and collected money which he wrapped in a piece of paper and threw over the wall. This went on for quite some time; the Jews played and sang and the policeman collected the money.

In another instance, though, some Christian Polish hooligans, who were aimlessly walking around, tossed large stones over the walls surrounding the ghetto and hurt passersby on *Chlodna* Street.

Moses successfully bribed an employee of the telephone company to connect his telephone line at home. With the line connected, Moses tried calling Wolf and Ida in Włoszczowa, but Wolf's line was disconnected. When he tried contacting Dr. Herman in Łódź, a stranger answered the phone and told him that the doctor had left months ago, and he did not know where he went. Finally, he called the hospital in Brest-Litovsk and tried to get in touch with his son Adam. Somebody answered the phone and told him to hold on. After waiting for quite some time, he heard Adam's voice.

Moses was very excited to hear Adam's voice.

"Adam, Adam, I am so glad to hear your voice. We are all fine. We now live in the Warsaw ghetto, but at least we have our own apartment. Mother and Jerzy are standing right next to me."

"Papa, I'm so glad to hear you are all well. I am also doing fine. I am currently working in a hospital. David came to visit me about a year ago, but that was the last time I saw him. I had heard that all the Poles who crossed the border into Russia were transferred to Siberia. He was either sent there or he went to his uncle Yulek in Moscow." (This conversation took place before he had received the letter from David.)

"I have absolutely no knowledge about the family in Włoszczowa or in Łódź. Either they have no phone anymore, or they are not there," Moses

continued.

Moses kept on talking, but there was no response forthcoming from the other end of the line. Moses shouted into the receiver "Hello, Hello, Adam do you hear me?" Silence. The line had been severed.

Moses had heard about groups of people who were told to gather at the *umschlagplatz*, and then herded onto trains to unknown destinations, never to return.

He decided it was time to act.

He inspected the area around his house and saw that he did not have much of a choice. He realized that if he left his house and he turned right toward Leszno Street, there was a heavily secured exit gate, and if he lowered himself from his rear window onto *Biala* Street, he would be forced to pass the exit gate at *Miranowski* Square and he would surely be noticed.

He therefore had to think of another alternative. He was going to buy his way to freedom. He met with a Polish smuggler and asked that he introduce him to someone in the underground who dealt in forged documents. He needed new documents for himself, his wife and his son.

Several days later the smuggler came to the ghetto along with a man dressed as an ordinary laborer with black paint on his hands, looking as if he worked on a printing press. He introduced himself as Czarny. Moses knew that it was not his real name, but did not really care.

They went to a small restaurant which he knew was quiet and where they would not be disturbed. He mainly feared informers of which there were many wandering around.

"I need documents stating that we are of Aryan origin," Moses said.

"For when do you need them?" Czarny asked.

"The quicker the better, but no longer than three days."

"I can have Polish identity cards for you within a week."

"Okay. Prepare Polish identity cards with fabricated names," Moses said.

"I need three current photographs. How old are you all?" Czarny asked.

"I have current photographs. I am 59, my wife is 49 and my son is 16. How much will it cost me and how do you want to get paid?" Moses inquired.

"It will cost you five thousand zlotys for each document. Half is due now and the balance upon delivery."

"Don't you think that you have exaggerated the price? Do you think that I have fifteen thousand zlotys in cash? I can give you jewelry in that amount," Moses suggested.

The man agreed to take the jewelry as payment, on the condition that he received it in advance. Moses told him that he had to get the jewelry from a friend who had it in his vault. Having no choice, Czarny agreed and a meeting was set for the following week. Moses gave him three photographs and when he wanted to choose names, Czarny said there was no need to do that. Moses understood that they had a huge stock of documents from the dead that were strewn in the streets under the rubble and all they had to do was to change the picture and place a forged stamp on it.

Good Luck for Izio and Stanislaw

As he did every Sunday morning, Stanislaw arrived at church along with other worshippers to hear the Sunday morning sermon. Dr. Alexander sat in the first row and Stanislaw's landlady sat in the row directly behind him.

After the service was over and everybody was greeting each other, Stanislaw's landlady approached Stanislaw and asked if she could come over to visit his sick wife, Eugenia. Stanislaw did not know what to do, as he did not want to raise any suspicion. He agreed, but explained that the stroke had left her immobile and unable to speak.

Stanislaw entered the house first, went into Eugenia's room and explained to her what she must do and how to act. He covered her head with a kerchief and pulled the blanket up to her chin.

When the landlady entered the apartment it was so dark that she nearly tripped. Stanislaw explained that light bothered the patient. They approached Eugenia who looked at them with half-closed eyes.

"How are you feeling?" she asked Eugenia.

Eugenia uttered meaningless syllables, twisted her face, causing saliva to drip from her mouth. Stanislaw ran to the kitchen and brought a towel to wipe her mouth.

He asked the landlady to kindly leave her alone because her getting

excited could cause the situation to worsen.

The shocked landlady crossed herself several times and left.

Dr. Alexander did not bother Stanislaw with unnecessary questions. One Sunday after the Santa Missa prayer, the doctor just disappeared. The priest later told Stanislaw that he heard that the doctor had temporarily moved to Berlin.

Izio, who became known by the name Maly, which means short and young, was sent by his partisan unit for target practice. Despite his young age, he showed determination, courage and ability to lead. In short order, he became the commander of a squadron of four men whose job it was to eliminate Germans and disrupt their supply routes. Although he never heard any anti-Semitic remarks from the members of the underground, they never did anything to protect or rescue any Jews.

At the end of December 1941, contact was made between the Jewish fighters of the ghetto and Christian Poles who began to smuggle weapons into the ghetto area for substantial payment. The Christians as well as the Jews took great risk in this operation for anyone caught smuggling weapons was immediately shot.

Word quickly spread about Maly's unit. With his new-found clout, he managed to set up a meeting with one of the field commanders to ask his permission to be the liaison between their group, the organizations being formed within the ghetto and the Jewish partisans. The general consensus was that if a serious group to fight the Germans could be organized, the partisans of the AK would join with them from outside the ghetto.

Is the End Near?

The lack of trust between the Polish Catholic community and the Jews deepened. As time passed and the Catholics witnessed the results of the mass deportations of Jews, and gained huge profits from smuggling operations and the looting of homes, assets and businesses of displaced Jews, their appetite for even more plunder increased, along with their bestial hatred for Jews.

"To think that we Jews were for centuries living among people who were literally wolves waiting to tear us to pieces," Miceslaw Pokorny wrote many years after the war.

Moses had hoped that not all Poles were like those who exploited the misery of the Jews; he believed that there were also good Poles. However, the fear of being handed over to the Gestapo by a Pole was too much for him to bear. He realized that he had no choice; it was time to make a move.

He was notified that his forged documents were ready and that the forger wanted to meet him at the same small restaurant where they had previously met. The forger brought the documents, three identification cards bearing classic Polish Christian names, and presented them to Moses.

Satisfied with the documents, Moses gave him one of the pieces of jewelry that Count Sosnowski had given him as a guarantee. It was a heavy gold necklace with a pear-shaped pendant with a precious gemstone set in the center. It was impossible to evaluate its sentimental

value in terms of money, but on the open market an appraiser would value it at no less than twenty thousand zlotys.

The Pole took the piece into his hand and asked, "What is its true value?"

"About twenty thousand zlotys, perhaps more," Moses replied.

"I hope you are not telling me a lie. I know where you live and I will come after you if I find out it is not worth what you tell me," the forger told him.

"I am telling you the truth. I even have a written certified appraisal at home," Moses said.

While they were talking, they heard people shouting and running in all directions and the sound of shots being fired. An SS commando unit had entered the ghetto in order to round up men for forced labor. Whoever did not listen to the commands and tried to escape was shot on the spot. When they reached the vicinity of the restaurant where Moses and the Pole were sitting, two soldiers came in, "You", they shouted and pointed to Moses, "Come with us."

Moses walked out with his hands raised above his head, when one of the soldiers came up to him and asked, "Who are you?"

Moses, who had not had time to familiarize himself with his new name, date of birth and other family members, blurted out, "Moses Wolowelski."

"Show me your identification card," he shouted at him.

Moses began emptying his pockets, when he noticed the Polish forger trying to distance himself and get away. Suddenly the second soldier screamed, "Stop." The Pole continued running into the ghetto and the soldier aimed his submachine gun and shot him in a hail of bullets.

The two soldiers grabbed Moses, put him into their car and took him to the Gestapo headquarters at 25 Szucha Street for questioning.

Cesia and Jerzy waited for their father, but he did not return. Cesia knew that he had gone to meet the Polish forger in the little restaurant across the street from where they lived. She went across the street to find out what had happened. After she had talked to the owner of the restaurant and learned what had happened, she went home crying and exhausted. She knew that she would never see her husband again.

In October 1941, posters were hung around the ghetto announcing that all the residents of the ghetto living on Leszno Street and south, had to move north, because the ghetto was being downsized. The new area of the ghetto would begin at Nowolipki Street.

Cesia had to leave her apartment and move to the terribly crowded part of the ghetto. She and Jerzy packed some clothes and other personal items. She hid in her clothes as much jewelry and cash as she possibly could, while the rest, that she could not take, she hid inside the doors. She dismantled and removed the locks and in the hollow part of the door dumped her gemstones, diamonds and various other items of jewelry.

When they left the house, Cesia did not even bother to lock the door. She was too distraught to look at all the expensive heirlooms she was leaving behind; the expensive oil paintings worth a fortune, the porcelain vessels imported from the Far East, the soft leather seats made by the finest upholsterer in Warsaw or the silver picture frames with the family pictures in them that sat on the fireplace in the center of the apartment. Cesia was now fighting for her life and the life of her son and was prepared for all eventualities.

As they stepped outside, a young man passed in front of her. She asked him to help her carry her two heavy suitcases. She paid him in advance for his service, but the poor boy could hardly walk. Luckily a man riding in a wagon passed and offered to take her luggage in the car.

When she reached the offices of the Judenrat, Cesia asked to meet with someone who could help her in finding a place to live. She had to wait for hours in line in a crowded, stuffy waiting room. Finally it was her turn. The man in charge understood from her words that it would be "worth his while" if he found her a nice apartment.

He took her to a large building where a number of apartments were reserved for the privileged. Cesia walked into the apartment and looked around. It was clean and tidy, but very small; one bedroom with a bathroom next to it, a small table and a gas stove. Not having much of a choice, she agreed to take it. She then pressed five hundred zloty into the man's hand.

Jerzy sat down on the bed meant for both of them to sleep on. Cesia took a clean sheet and a white duvet out of one of the suitcases. "At least now we will feel at home," she said. At the mention of the word "home," she burst into tears. How she missed Moses now."Who knows what happened to him, if he is alive or dead." Many thoughts went through her mind as she fell asleep in her clothes. Jerzy covered her and sat next to her crying softly.

Refugees began arriving from all over Germany and from as far away as Czechoslovakia. They came penniless and all they received was a ration of 180 grams of bread per day. Four hundred people lived in one building with no running water, no toilets or heating. They had to sleep on boards that were placed on the freezing floor. They were swollen from hunger and dysentery, and every day many of them died, especially the elderly and children.

Cesia went out to get some food. She had to struggle to clear a path between the crowds of hungry people walking aimlessly up and down the street just to be mobile and to be among people.

Suddenly, before her eyes a scene was unfolding. There stood a young boy in front of an overturned crate with rotting apples heaped on top. An SS soldier came toward him, kicked the crate and trampled the apples. The boy burst into tears, as the soldier slapped him in the face. Just then a black car approached and an SS officer got out and approached the soldier to find out what had happened. After hearing the incident, the officer took out a ten zloty note from his pocket and handed it to the boy. Just as the boy was about to take it, the officer dropped the note on the ground. As the boy bent down to pick it up, the officer mumbled, "Enjoy, because your troubles will shortly be coming to an end." The boy smiled to the officer, not understanding what the officer was referring to.

Cesia bought some food. She did not want to buy too much, lest it becomes known that she had money and would become the target of thieves. She knew that the on the planet on which she now lived, there were no rules and no code of ethics, and only a survival instinct and 'dog eat dog'.

Every night she would hear the Gestapo conducting raids on several houses and forcing the occupants out into the street to take them to the *Umschlagplatz*. From there they were herded onto freight trains in terribly crowded conditions and taken to one of the many labor or extermination camps, never to return.

Cesia went to the offices of the Red Cross, and dropped off a letter addressed to her sister Ida and her husband Wolf in Wloszczowa.

My dears,

A terrible disaster has befallen us. Moses was taken in for questioning and did not return home. We were driven from our home which was

subsequently plundered. Jerzy and I are presently living in the sealed ghetto in very cramped quarters. Any day now we will be sent from here. Please do not forget us, my dears. We had it much too good; perhaps too much extravagance; we are now being punished. My only consolation is that at least Adam is alive. If anything is to happen to us, do not seek revenge. It seems that it is our fate; we were born to be hated and as such we die. Nobody will cry at our graves. At this time we must raise our heads to heaven and seek God, who does not exist and therefore will not help.

Love,

Cesia

Moses

During his interrogation by the Gestapo, Moses told them that he simply wanted to escape from the ghetto with his family and that he had obtained false documents to implement his goal. The interrogator was very courteous and even offered him a cigarette and a cup of tea. The conversation was conducted in a civilized manner, in German, a language in which Moses was fluent.

Moses told the interrogator all that had happened to him and about the wealth that he had amassed. He hinted about his relationship with Count

Sosnowski of Maluszyn and his treasure that he was holding as collateral. He presented himself as a man of great financial means and the interrogator was very impressed.

After the interrogation he was transferred to a cell. The investigator apologized that the cell was not what he was used to, but he did not have the authority to take him to a hotel. After several days of not being interrogated, he was once again taken to the interrogation room. The investigator gave him sheet of paper and asked him to write down where he had hidden the money and jewelry. Moses asked the interrogator to promise him that he would release him if he gave him the information he requested.

Interrogator: "Mr. Moses Wolowelsky, we are not brutes, but rather a very civilized people. As you can see, we have not touched even one hair of your head."

Moses: "I see and therefore I am collaborating with you."

Interrogator: "Are you willing to show us where the jewels are hidden?"

Moses: "Absolutely, but first I must talk to my wife, because I am not sure where she hid them after I was arrested."

Interrogator: "If we take you to your house, will you show us where they are hidden?"

Moses: "Absolutely."

A Gestapo officer accompanied Moses back to his cell, where he was imprisoned for another week. The food was edible and sufficient, but the room was very cold and he slept on a bed full of bed-bugs which bit him and caused him to scratch himself.

Two weeks after he was arrested, Moses was transported to the ghetto in a Gestapo car accompanied by the interrogator and another officer.

When they reached Ogrodowa Street, Moses could not help but notice

that the ghetto had shrunken and that the streets were deserted. He and the interrogator went up to the apartment while the officer remained in the car.

When they entered, he saw that the door was not locked but that nothing was missing; everything was in its place. Since the apartment building stood between the old and new walls it was difficult for anybody to have access to it.

Moses went up to the hiding place he knew, but there was not a sign of any jewelry.

The SS interrogator became annoyed and said, " You want to buy time, so you are telling me stories."

Moses insisted that he must meet his wife to find out where she had hidden the jewelry.

"As I told you during your questioning, I have not been home since I was arrested and my wife has obviously changed the hiding place," Moses said.

Moses and the interrogator went downstairs and they drove straight to the headquarters of the Judenrat.

"Wait in the car," the interrogator said. "This is really beginning to irritate me."

He slammed the car door shut as he got out. As soon as he stepped out of the car, as if by a miracle the street emptied.

When the interrogator came out of the building, he was holding a piece of paper with Cesia's address on it. He ordered the driver to drive straight to the house. He did not exchange any words with Moses, who sat nervously in the back seat in anticipation of the meeting with his family.

When they reached the building, the driver was ordered to stop and let Moses and the interrogator out. They entered the building and climbed

the steps to the apartment. When Cesia opened the door and saw Moses accompanied by an SS officer, she nearly fainted.

Moses came up to her and hugged her. Her entire body was trembling. When she told him that she had hidden the jewelry inside the doors in their apartment on Ogrodowa Street, he was sure that the jewels would be his ticket to freedom.

"Let's go" the interrogator said to Moses, as they rushed down the stairs. Cesia stood in disbelief at what she thought was a miracle in the making. "He will be home shortly," the interrogator yelled.

As soon as they arrived at the apartment on Ogrodowa, they dismantled the doors where they had been told the jewelry was hidden. Indeed, there it was, and it all tumbled out onto the floor. The interrogator collected all the jewels and put them in the briefcase that he had brought along.

He then turned to Moses, pulled out his gun and shot him at point blank range in the heart. Moses fell dead on the spot as blood flowed from the wound and was absorbed in the thick carpet of the magnificent living room.

Moses died Sunday, December 1, 1941 at the age of 59.

The Final Solution

On December 6, 1941 the Soviets mounted a counterattack against the German siege of Moscow.

At the same time, in the town of Chelmno in southeastern Poland, the Germans began to exterminate Jews by asphyxiation through the means of carbon monoxide. As soon as the gas reaches the brain, it causes disorientation, loss of consciousness, asphyxiation and finally death. The Germans would put approximately fifty people into the cargo compartment of a truck, shut and seal the doors, extend the exhaust pipe with a hose, insert the end of the hose into the compartment and turn on the engine of the truck.

In the city of Vilnius, the Germans killed approximately 100,000 Jews and their collaborators in a matter of a few days. They were taken to the forest, ordered to dig massive pits, undress, line up and then were systematically shot. The locals were employed to extract the gold from their teeth and to cut off ring-bearing fingers. The bodies were then thrown into the pit. Many were only wounded, yet thrown into the pit and covered with earth while still alive.

In the city of Kiev a proclamation was issued, telling all Jews residing in Kiev and its environs to present themselves at eight in the morning on Monday September 29th at the corner of Malinovski and Dochtorov streets. They were ordered to take along their documents, money, valuables, warm clothes, underwear etc. Any person found violating the decree was shot. It also stated that any local resident caught stealing from an apartment vacated by a Jew would be shot.

The Jews who arrived at the designated place thought they were being deported. Instead they were taken to the nearby forest, known as Babi Yar. In the end 34,000 Jews from the city of Kiev were massacred at Babi Yar. The Ukrainians were only too happy to assist in the extermination.

The Jews of Lublin were taken to Belzec as well as Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Birkenau extermination camps.

The Nazi program known as the Final Solution, for the extermination of all Jews, was now in full swing.

Epilogue

The Jewish resistance of the Warsaw ghetto was established on July 28th 1942. Izio, who had joined the partisans, smuggled weapons to the resistance fighters and passed along instructions in order to coordinate the Jewish fighters inside the ghetto with the Polish partisans operating outside it. When the uprising began there were twenty-two combat units operating within the ghetto area.

On one of his trips into the ghetto, Izio met with Cesia and Jerzy, after having discovered where they lived.

When the uprising began he joined the Jewish resistance fighters. One day he and his friends were hiding in a building when the German storm troopers set the building ablaze. Trying to escape, he jumped from the balcony to his death. He died on May 16, 1943, at the age of twenty-one.

On September 10, 1942, Cesia and her son Jerzy, along with thousands of other Jews, were put on a train to the Treblinka death camp. It was the last transport out of the Warsaw ghetto; it led to the uprising against the Germans. Cesia was 46 years old when she died and Jerzy was seventeen. Mozes died on a Sunday in December 1941 at the age of fifty-nine, when a Gestapo officer shot him in the heart after having stolen all his jewelry. On September 19, 1942, two days before Yom Kippur, 5,000 Jews living

in the ghetto of Włoszczowa were sent to the Treblinka death camp. Grandmother Paulina, Ida and her two sisters, Rosa, Berta and her husband and Dr. Herman and his children, Irena and Mietek, were among those sent to their deaths. The Germans left 180 Jews behind to dismantle and clean the ghetto. When their job was completed in December, the last members of the Włoszczowa ghetto were shot dead. Stanislaw and Eugenia survived. In 1945 they moved to Toronto, Canada, where they lived until their death. They had no children. They visited Israel several times and met with their nephew, David.

David married Fela, a Jewish Polish girl whom he met in Novosibirsk. During the war he moved to Uzbekistan where his oldest son, Wladek, was born. He joined the Polish army in Russia and returned to Poland with the rank of captain. He then fought alongside the Red Army and reached as far as Berlin. After the war he moved to Stettin in Poland, where his second son was born. He named him Jerzy, after his cousin who had perished in the Holocaust.

David had heard from Stanislaw the story about the blackmail that Lolek perpetrated on his brother Izio and went looking for Lolek to take revenge but could not find him. He returned to Włoszczowa and received from a neighbor items that she had had for safekeeping, including Lilly's album. In 1950, after a surge of anti-Semitism in Poland, he emigrated to Israel.

Adam Wolowelski, who became a doctor in Brest-Litovsk, did not survive. At the end of the war, in 1945, he was arrested by the Russian KGB, and sent to prison where he apparently perished. The mystery of his disappearance has never been resolved.

Stefania Friedberg survived when she fled to Russia with her husband Cezary Romanov. They were exiled to Siberia, where her husband died of

an unknown illness. Stefania returned to Poland and married a Jewish refugee, and in 1951 they moved to Israel. Quite by chance, she met David in Tel Aviv.

Ilia Friedberg's mother survived, and never returned to Poland. She remained in Russia and lived in the city of Kharkov, where she married and gave birth to a son who bore her two grandchildren. Her son eventually got divorced and the mother and her sons emigrated to the United States, where they live in New York.

Conductor and composer Julius Wolfson, Grandmother Paulina's brother, who had emigrated to the United States before the war, died in 1944 of an illness in New York at the age of 64. In 1944, Izabela Grinevskaya died in Istanbul at the age of 80.

Notes

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